

To: Smith, Bonnie[smith.bonnie@epa.gov]
From: Vocus Subscriber
Sent: Mon 3/24/2014 9:59:57 AM
Subject: EPA Region 3 Headlines

EPA Region 3 Headlines

Headline	Date	Outlet	Links
DC (4)			
Under fire, Kasich defends tax hikes	03/23/2014	<i>Hill - Online, The</i>	View Text Clip Print

...billion over the next three years, while raising almost that much in new tax revenue, largely from tax hikes on commercial activities, tobacco products and fracking for natural gas. Americans for Tax Reform was quick to blast the proposal, arguing that it will "rob Peter to pay Paul." "Gov. Kasich...

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...depicting President Obama in the uniform of Mao Zedong, the founder of the nation's communist party. Trees are beginning to blossom, but a haze of air pollution hung in the air, making the sky gray Sunday afternoon. Obama seemed not to notice. She and Sasha and Malia descended

the mountain on...

Oil-leaking barge in Texas cleared of contents	03/23/2014	<i>Washington Post - Online, The</i>	Text	View Clip
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...emptying of the barge Sunday, a process known as lightering as contents are transferred to other vessels, was equally significant. “The remaining risk of pollution, we've removed that,” he said. More than 380 people — “and we've ordered more,” he said — plus a fleet of oil-retrieving skimmers and...

Oil company endorses NV's proposed fracking rules	03/23/2014	<i>Washington Examiner - Online</i>	Text	View Clip
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ELKO, Nev. (AP) — A Houston-based oil company has endorsed the state's proposed rules governing hydraulic fracturing, better known as fracking. The proposed regulations support proven technologies to safely develop Nevada's oil and gas, said Kevin Vorhaben of Noble Energy Inc.,...

DE (1)

Aquaculture workshop offers answers, raises new	03/23/2014	<i>Cape Gazette - Online</i>	Text	View Clip
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questions

...Resources and Environmental Control representatives at the meeting. Legislation creating shellfish aquaculture in Delaware was passed last year and DNREC is in the first stages of creating rules and regulations to implement the program. Leases will be sold by the state to farm in Rehoboth,...

MD (8)

N.C. wants to nix Duke 03/23/2014

Baltimore Sun - Online

Energy's \$99,000 settlement for coal ash leaks

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The nation's largest electricity provider could soon be back on the hook for a once-settled lawsuit alleging that it illegally contaminated groundwater through leaky coal ash dumps near Charlotte and Asheville in North Carolina. State regulators had agreed to accept a \$99,000 fine from...

N.C. regulators 0 *Ba* [Text](#)
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...Thursday, saying the utility deliberately dumped 61 million gallons of toxic coal ash waste into a tributary of the Cape Fear River, which provides drinking water for several cities and towns in the state. The state Department of Environment and Natural Resources said the giant utility,...

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Baltimore Sun - [Text](#)
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...at Kemper. Those rules could accelerate the already dramatic shift to natural gas. The price of gas has fallen sharply as hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, has increased supplies, and plants can be built quickly and cheaply. But natural gas prices have been wildly volatile in the past, and...

**Wide Variety
of Free Flicks
Across D.C.
Region**

03/23/2014

*CBS DC-
Online*

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...winners and nominees
at Central Library, 1015
N. Quincy St., Arlington,
Va. 7pm: "Gasland Part
II" (2013). The rising
stakes of hydraulic
fracturing, or "fracking."
Part of Meaningful

Movies: Olney at the
 Buffington Building
 Community Room, 3300
 Olney Sandy Spring Rd.,
 Olney, Md. 7pm: Dr.
 Who Happy...

DEP: Drillers	0	<i>Cumberland</i>	Text	View Clip
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HARRISBURG, Pa. — Environmental
 watchdogs say a system for tracking
 radioactive material unearthed during gas
 drilling depends too much on the industry's
 self-policing, making it impossible to
 judge how much waste is generated or how
 dangerous it might...

Can plants take on new	03/23/2014	<i>Daily Times - Online,</i>	Vi
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...Strano, a professor at the Massachusetts
 Institute of Technology in Cambridge,
 Mass., wants to give them totally new
 functions as sensors, antennae and tiny
 power plants. "For millennia, we've used
 plants for wood, fruit and burning - very
 low-tech functions," said Strano, a
 professor of chemical engineering....

Sports in brief	03/23/2014	<i>Daily Times -</i>	View Clip
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DNREC to hold public
 hearings on fishing
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 Department of Natural

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Environmental Control,
Division of Fish &
Wildlife will...

Foreign traffic laws crank up chaos	0Daily Times - 3Online, The / 2 3 / 2 0 1 4	Text	View Clip
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..."You can't drive this car in Paris." Turns
out my visit last week coincided with some
of the city's worst smog in years. In an
effort to cut back on pollution, only cars
with odd-numbered license plates could
drive in the City of Light. Mine had an
even number. Fortunately, I wasn't
driving...

PA (35)

Gas tax not taxing enough	03/24/2014	<i>Citizens' Voice - Online, The</i>	View Clip T e x t
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...host of legislators have
argued that the total
taxation package in each
state is different, making
it meaningless that
Pennsylvania is the only
major gas-drilling state
without a severance tax
on production. The state
Independent Fiscal
Office, however, has
found that circumstance
to be meaningful...

Legislature, Corbett settle for bottom	0Scranton Times- 3Tribune - /Online, The	Text	View Clip
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...host of legislators have argued that the total taxation package in each state is different, making it meaningless that Pennsylvania is the only major gas-drilling state without a severance tax on production. The state Independent Fiscal Office, however, has found that circumstance to be meaningful...

Open Line

03/24/2014

Sentinel - Online, The

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...did Bush and Cheney do about it? How soon we forget. Of course I support the proposed windmill project, because they are a lot less intrusive than fracking for natural gas. If you are thinking about shopping for a home, beware of Brown Township. I guess when there is a clinic in this area...

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...commissioners voted 3-0 to approve an agreement for 2,100 feet of rail line extension at NuWeld Inc., in which the county will give up to \$20,000 of natural gas drilling impact funds, the

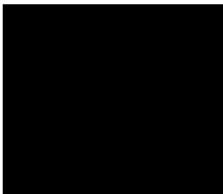
Joint Rail Authority will pay for engineering costs, and NuWeld is paying \$150,000 for construction costs with company...

State gas fees are too low	03/23/2014	Bucks County Courier Times - Online	Text	View Clip
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...Office — the state's version of the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office — found that the fee Pennsylvania collects on natural gas extracted from the Marcellus Shale is the lowest among the 11 states examined. The study only confirms what critics of the Corbett administration have been saying...

Oil company endorses NV's proposed fracking rules	03/23/2014	Centre Daily Times - Online	View Clip
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...Updated 3 hours ago
ELKO, Nev. — A Houston-based oil company has endorsed the state's proposed rules governing hydraulic fracturing, better known as fracking. The proposed regulations support proven technologies to safely develop Nevada's oil and gas, said Kevin Vorhaben of Noble Energy Inc.,...

	High-tech power plant is \$5 billion bet on future of coal	03/23/2014	Centre Daily Times - Online	Text	View Clip
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...at Kemper. Those rules could accelerate the already dramatic shift to natural gas. The price of gas has fallen sharply as hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, has increased supplies, and plants can be built quickly and cheaply. But natural gas prices have been wildly volatile in the past, and...

No sweet corn for the Fourth of July? Long winter, wet fields threaten crop

03/23/2014

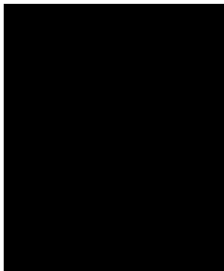
Lancaster Online

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...may spoil it More about Farming ARTICLE: Sheep give birth on their own schedule, not the farmer's ARTICLE: Lancaster County joins fight against EPA in setting pollution limits for farmers ARTICLE: Antique Toolbox ARTICLE: Farmer-legislator Arthur Hershey contrasts roles in life...

Anti-fracking activist banned from Pennsylvania land heads to court 0 *M* [Text](#)
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HARRISBURG, Pennsylvania (Reuters) - An anti-fracking activist is set to ask a Pennsylvania judge on Monday to lift an injunction that bars her from her local hospital, grocery and other properties...

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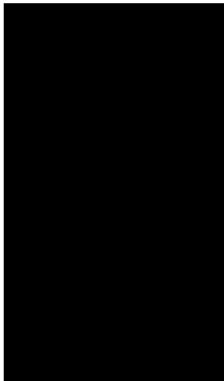
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...open to the public at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday. Energy, Diana Stares acknowledged, is a “very divisive” subject. Fossil fuels, renewables, drilling and fracking seem to have as many fervent supporters as fervent detractors. As director of the Center for Energy Policy and Management at Washington...

High-tech	03/23/2014	<i>Pittsburgh Post-</i>	View Clip
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...at Kemper. Those rules could accelerate the already dramatic shift to natural gas. The price of gas has fallen sharply as hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, has increased

supplies, and plants can be built quickly and cheaply. But natural gas prices have been wildly volatile in the past, and...



Tax issue sparks political debate 0 *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* - [Text](#)
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...told him, 'Be careful, we're coming for you,' " said Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Corbett during a visit to Somerset County earlier this month. The state's Marcellus Shale play alone is estimated to have trillions of cubic feet of recoverable gas, although precise figures are constantly evolving. "We're...

Drilling, Fracking Efficiency Fuels Oil and Gas Boom

03/23/2014

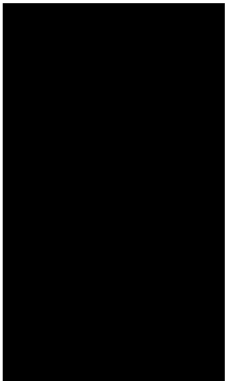
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...according to a new U.S. Energy Information Administration report. Production of crude oil and natural gas through the use of hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, is considered to have a significant effect on climate change because of methane leaks in the natural gas distribution system that haven't...

Prudent drilling: The county has a good deal at Deer Lakes Park 0 *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* - [Text](#)
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*Taking advantage of the potential
for jobs and energy while
protecting the region's air and
water supplies is the key to
successfully tapping Marcellus
Shale deposits deep underground.
It looks like Allegheny County
Executive Rich Fitzgerald has
achieved the right balance with a
five-year...*

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*Pittsburgh Post-
Gazette - Online*

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...remains an eclectic party of one. Two weeks ago Mr. Brown ended up on the opposite side of two key planks in the California Democrats' platform — banning fracking and legalizing pot. Like Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper and California Sen. Dianne Feinstein, Mr. Brown is wary about legalized pot and...

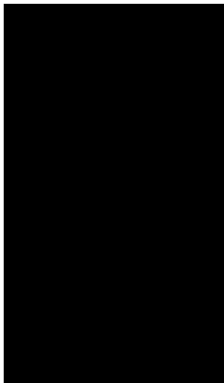
Chambersbur 03/23/2014
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Public Opinion - View Clip
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...this new development.
The borough is creating
the new department as
early as this summer, but
within two years, in
response to a mandate
from the U.S.
Environmental Protection
Agency, according to
Stonehill. The EPA is
enforcing the federal

Clean Water Act of 1972
across...



Democratic 0 *Reading Eagle* - [Text](#)
candidates eye 3 *Online*
taxes to ease /
wealth gap in 2
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...could support making the income-tax system more progressive but only after ruling out other more politically feasible steps to raise money, such as a gas drilling tax and closing tax loopholes. "Any general increase in a tax burden should be a last resort, not a first conversation," he said....

Ban variable power rates

03/23/2014

Republican & Herald - Online

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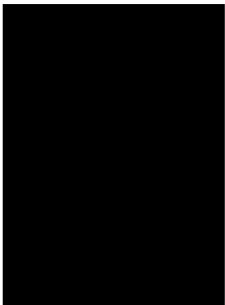
...predatory pricing. Lawmakers deregulated the electricity market more than a decade ago. Since then, the abundance of natural gas resulting from the Marcellus Shale drilling boom has driven down prices. But many consumers received nasty shocks when they opened their power bills midwinter - exponential...

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...Cassarella writes, "Enjoyed your latest column. You certainly



were daring in your youth. My friends would take me to a place called the Powder Hole. The water was crystal clear. I haven't been there in years but it certainly was a scenic place." Now off-limits to bathers, in my day it was...

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...certain amount. Income above that would be taxed at a still-to-be-determined flat rate. All five Democratic candidates support a new tax on natural gas drilling. One of them, state Treasurer Rob McCord, advocates a 10 percent tax on the net value of gas. Katie McGinty, a former state environmental...

Pennsylvania's 03/23/2014

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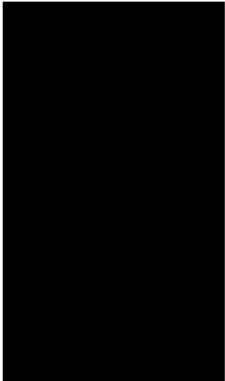
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...could support making
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should be a last resort,
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he said....



Drilling waste 0
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HARRISBURG — Environmental
watchdogs say a system for tracking
radioactive material unearthed during gas
drilling depends too much on the industry's
self-policing, making it impossible to
judge how much waste is generated or how
dangerous it might...

Your opinions: Letters 03/23/2014
to the editor for March
24

*Lebanon Daily News -
Online, The*

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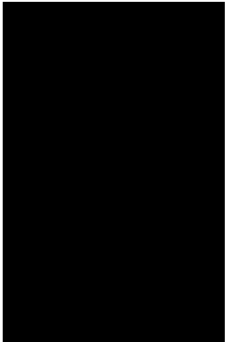
...Pittsburgh and what it will mean for my
generation and those to come if something isn't
done to address the problem. We can make a dent
in the air pollution if we do one simple thing —
limit our energy consumption. This can be done
by recycling products, turning off lights and
unplugging your...

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HARRISBURG — Environmental watchdogs say a system for tracking radioactive material unearthed during gas drilling depends too much on the industry's self-policing, making it impossible to judge how much waste is generated or how dangerous it might...

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Times Herald -
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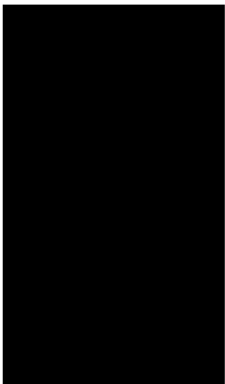
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...source. State Rep. Thaddeus Kirkland, D-159, who also represents much of Chester Upland, has a potential source. That would be the vast deposits of Marcellus Shale now being extracted from the Pennsylvania countryside. In the cacophony of potential property tax solutions, Senate Bill 299 is...

COMMENTARY: AMY GOODMAN Fukushima damage still gets tallied	03/23/2014	<i>Times Leader - Online</i>	View Clip T e x t
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...missing. Casualties are still mounting, though, both in Japan and much farther away. The impact of the Fukushima nuclear meltdown on health and the environment is severe, compounded daily as radioactive pollution continues to pour from the site, owned by the Tokyo Electric Power Company,...

	Anti-fracking activist appeals court injunction	0	<i>Times Leader - Online</i>	Text	View Clip
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MONTROSE — A Susquehanna County woman known for her staunch activism against natural gas drilling has been barred from more than 200,000 acres in Pennsylvania. Vera Scroggins, 63, of northern Susquehanna County, was served in October...

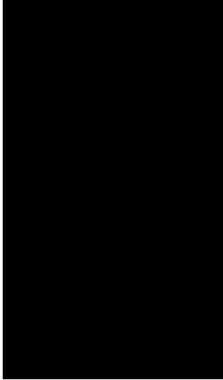
Democratic candidate for governor	03/23/2014	<i>TribLIVE</i>	Text	View Clip
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McGinty
builds name
recognition,
support

...Defense Council, as well as union endorsements, including Pittsburgh's Amalgamated Transit Union Local 8. McGinty supports imposing a severance tax on Marcellus shale natural gas drilling, a policy vehemently opposed by Republicans who control the governor's mansion and General Assembly. ...

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...\$5,000 through a finance plan but will try to sell the machine on its own first. Thompson said the sweeper potentially could fetch as much as \$9,000 from a Marcellus shale drilling outfit.

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This site is optimized for mobile devices with no download required. I am writing about the fracking trucks on my road, in Ohioville. They go by so fast that I cannot walk on the edge of the road, anymore. My family walks along our road...

THE WEEK AT A 03/22/2014 *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

GLANCE

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...giant "chicken from hell." Allegheny County Council expects within two weeks to take up Executive Rich Fitzgerald's controversial proposal to allow gas drilling beneath Deer Lakes Park, which would bring the county millions of dollars in annual revenue but has drawn safety concerns from local...

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Aaron Stubna, the owner of the Lincoln Barbershop, a cozy, three-chair, shoebox of a shop on Bellevue's main street, has had it with the smelly pollution that pours from the Shenango coke works on nearby Neville Island and often blankets his community. And Judy McAuley, who opened her...

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...the Appalachian drilling market. "We will be able to provide efficient top-

hole drilling services in the deeper Utica shale play in Ohio, as well the Marcellus shale wells in Pennsylvania and West Virginia,” Donahue said in a release. All rigs are focused on top-hole vertical air drilling and...

Miller, William Stroud "Bill"	03/22/2014	Reporter - Online, The	View Clip T e x t
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WILLIAM STROUD
MILLER William Stroud ("Bill") Miller, 69, died peacefully on February 6, 2014, in Sentara Virginia Beach General Hospital after a debilitating illness. The second child of Samuel D. Miller, Jr., and Jane (Stroud) Miller, Bill graduated...

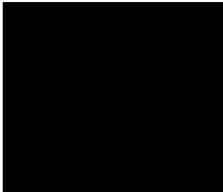
Shale drilling cited in region's job boom	0	Pittsburgh	Text
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...employment will expand by more than 1 percent per year nationwide, with 72 percent of those jobs in metropolitan areas, the report said, noting that the Marcellus shale play in Pennsylvania and Bakken shale drilling in North Dakota significantly fueled that expansion. Energy-related manufacturing...

VA (10)

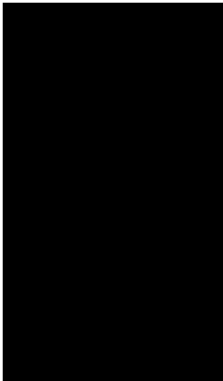
Residents sue city and Kroger	03/24/2014	<i>Petersburg Progress-Index - Online</i>	Text	View Clip
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...site at the corner of MacArthur and Hamilton avenues. They claim their property would also be



impacted by increased traffic, as well as light and noise pollution, and parking lot runoff. The lawsuit was filed March 10 in Colonial Heights Circuit Court by attorney Dennis J. Livingston. The Livingstons...

Hall is hopeful	0	<i>M</i>	Text	View Clip
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...Centre (CCBC) is in the “higher levels of approval,” according to County Administrator Tim Hall. According to previous Bulletin reports, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been reluctant to issue the permit due to the lack of a company that has publicly committed to the site and prepared detailed...

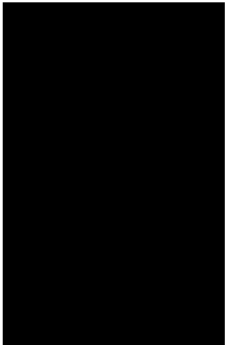
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...you buy it, the better it is for you and the planet,” she said. Apart from health benefits, the vegan diet is gentler on natural resources and the environment than an animal-based diet, she said. Twenty-percent of man-made pollution is from the meat industry, Bell said. It takes 40 calories...

Can plants take on new roles with tiny carbon materials?	03/23/2014	News Leader - Online, The	View Clip
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...Strano, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Mass., wants to give them totally new functions as sensors, antennae and tiny power plants. "For millennia, we've used plants for wood, fruit and burning - very low-tech functions," said Strano, a professor of chemical engineering....

	Foreign traffic laws crank up chaos	0News Leader - 3Online, The	Text	View Clip
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..."You can't drive this car in Paris." Turns out my visit last week coincided with some of the city's worst smog in years. In an effort to cut back on pollution, only cars with odd-numbered license plates could drive in the City of Light. Mine had an even number. Fortunately, I wasn't driving...

**Key recognition for
Tangier Island**

03/23/2014

*News Leader - Online,
The*

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Tangier Island, a speck of land in the middle of the Chesapeake Bay where islanders speak a hybrid English accent, is headed to the state's catalog of historic places and a likely spot on the National...

Anti-fracking 0 [Vi](#) [Text](#)
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David DeKok Reuters 12:03 a.m.
EDT, March 24, 2014
HARRISBURG, Pennsylvania
(Reuters) - An anti-fracking
activist is set to ask a
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A 03/23/2014

Townhall

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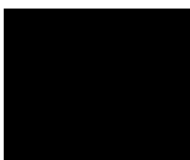
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By David DeKok HARRISBURG, Pennsylvania (Reuters) - An anti-fracking activist is set to ask a Pennsylvania judge on Monday to lift an injunction that bars her from her local hospital, grocery and other properties...

N.C. judge rejects Duke's call to stay coal ash ruling	03/23/2014	Virginian-Pilot - Online	View Clip T e x t
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Posted to: Duke Energy
Environment News North
Carolina (Randall Hill |
The Associated Press)"
vocusinstance="0"> Girls
play on a soccer field
near the L.V. Sutton...

	Welcome return in the Lafayette	03/23/2014	Virginian- Pilot - Online	Text	View Clip
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...professor. It gave them a glimpse of the past and hopefully of the future. It's too early to celebrate the return of Lafayette oysters to our tables. The water still isn't clean enough to allow harvesting. But we can celebrate the efforts of many to protect and improve our environment....

WV (10)

Voice of the people 03/24/2014 *Herald-Dispatch - Online, The* [Text](#)

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..."Country Roads" an official state song. Have they listened to it? The Blue Ridge Mountains and the Shenandoah River are entirely in the Commonwealth of Virginia, from which we seceded in 1863, and don't even touch our borders. (Please tell me that our legislators know this.) They've changed our apt...

Stop idling around schools 03/24/2014 *Herald-Dispatch - Online, The* [Text](#)

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...problems for kids, exposing them to densely polluted air from car exhaust and triggering coughing, asthma and bronchitis. One idling car emits 20 times more pollution than a car traveling at 32 mph. And it spews ozone, sulfur, dioxides, carbon monoxide, particulate matter and more. Geez, wheeze....

Ohio wastewater official nears plea change hearing 03/24/2014 *WTRF-TV - Online* [Text](#)

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CLEVELAND (AP) - A former senior official at a northeast Ohio wastewater company who's been charged with violating the federal Clean Water Act is preparing to attend a change of plea hearing. Ben Lupo's appearance before Judge Donald Nugent is scheduled Monday...

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Akron company will convert plastics for fuel	03/23/2014	<i>Intelligencer - Online, The</i>	Text	View Clip
<p>...would otherwise end up buried in the earth. Akron welcomed the plant to an east side neighborhood after residents in Cleveland objected to the project. EPA officials say the plant would be a minor pollution emitter. Vadxx Energy founder and petroleum geologist Bill Ullom tells the Akron Beacon...</p>				
W.Va. House Democrats at tipping point this	03/23/2014	<i>Register-Herald - Online, The</i>	Text	View Clip

election

CHARLESTON — By tying West Virginia Democrats to all things Obama and Washington, D.C., Republicans hope they can claim key congressional wins and end 85 years of Democratic...

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Readers' 03/20/2014 *Charleston* [Text](#)
forum *Gazette, The*

...reluctance is troubling Editor: I am beginning to wonder if there are political reasons why the federal government is reluctant to help in the water situation in Charleston and surrounding areas. Seven weeks after the spill there was an extensive report on CNN regarding the situation...

Under fire, Kasich defends tax hikes | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

Hill - Online, The

Gov. John Kasich (R-Ohio) pushed back hard Sunday against conservative critics of his proposal to hike some taxes in the state.

Kasich's latest budget proposal, while slashing income taxes, would make up the revenue difference largely by hiking taxes on tobacco and drilling for natural gas – proposals that have drawn outcries from conservative groups like Grover Norquist's Americans for Tax Reform (ATR).

Appearing on the "Fox News Sunday" program, a feisty Kasich dismissed those criticisms, arguing that, revenue being necessary to run the state, the money has to come from somewhere.

"You have got to have a tax system. The question is, what is the tax system that allows you to collect revenue, but at the same time provides the ... greatest chance at economic growth?" he said.

Unveiled earlier this month, Kasich's latest budget proposal would cut income taxes by \$2.6 billion over the next three years, while raising almost that much in new tax revenue, largely from tax hikes on commercial activities, tobacco products and fracking for natural gas.

Americans for Tax Reform was quick to blast the proposal, arguing that it will "rob Peter to pay Paul."

"Gov. Kasich should work with lawmakers in Columbus to craft a pro-growth tax reform measure, consolidating income tax brackets while reducing the tax burden and simplifying the mess that is the municipal income tax regime," Will Upton, ATR's manager of state affairs, wrote on the group's website. "Avoiding any 'rob Peter to pay Paul' schemes would be key in this process. Yes, Ohio needs to continue its efforts to reform the tax code, but doing so on the backs of the oil and gas industry, Ohio businesses, tobacco consumers, and vapor product consumers is not the way to achieve this."

Kasich, who's often mentioned as a 2016 GOP presidential contender, was undaunted Sunday. He noted that since he took office in 2011, the economy has improved significantly in Ohio, where unemployment is now 6.5 percent – the lowest level in more than six years.

"The proof is in the pudding," Kasich said. "We've been doing this for three years since we all came in to office. And it's working. ... The philosophy that we have seems to be paying off."

Still, Ohio's Republican-led legislature appears to be in no hurry to act on the proposed tax reforms. The Columbus Dispatch reported Sunday that GOP leaders, hoping to curtail controversy, might delay a vote until after November's elections.

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Michelle Obama visits Great Wall of China, meets with students about education

| [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

Washington Post - Online, The

MUTIANYU, Great Wall — As her daughters strolled ahead, peering down to a great ravine, Michelle Obama walked along a stretch of this towering stone wall along walkways that date back to the Ming Dynasty.

They walked from tower 14 to tower 15, strolling along together while their staff and security detail hung a little ways back.

The wall, which has steep walkways undulating through a chain of mountains, is a draw for both tourists and dignitaries. Obama's mother, Marian Robinson, skipped the hike and stood on a platform just below the wall that gave a sweeping view of the scenic spot.

Other than two large black birds, it was quiet out. There were no crowds and even vendors at the foot of the wall had put away their t-shirts depicting President Obama in the uniform of Mao Zedong, the founder of the nation's communist party.

Trees are beginning to blossom, but a haze of air pollution hung in the air, making the sky gray Sunday afternoon.

Obama seemed not to notice. She and Sasha and Malia descended the mountain on toboggans, which zip down like a bobsled.

Earlier in the day, she was complimentary of the weather, saying she had spoken to her husband about it. “When he was here, it was freezing,” she told a group of Chinese nationals invited to the U.S. embassy to meet with her about education prior to her hike up the Great Wall. “I’m calling him and talking about how warm and sunny it is.”

Obama convened the roundtable with eight Chinese educators, students and parents Sunday morning. It was off-the-record in order to allow for a frank discussion, officials said. Max Baucus, the newly installed U.S. ambassador to China, sat in as did Tina Tchen, the first lady's chief of staff and a first-generation Chinese American.

“One of the reasons I have come to China is to learn more about education around the

world,” Obama said at the top of the meeting. “It’s personal, because I wouldn’t be where I am today without my parents investing and pushing me to get a good education.”

The discussion included a critique of standardized testing, which is rigidly applied in China’s educational system and also has been a source of debate in U.S. schools. The group, including Obama, agreed that tests track only one measure of a student’s potential, said a senior White House official who was in the meeting and agreed to tell reporters about it on background because of the sensitivity of the discussion. One participant spoke of the challenges minorities face in China, telling Obama of a predominantly minority province in China with a school age population of more than a million and only two high schools.

The conversation was the most substantial interaction Obama has had with Chinese nationals, away from government officials, thus far.

She had also seen little of the political activism bubbling in China.

As her motorcade rolled down Dongfang Donglu Road toward the embassy, a man and a woman were protesting loudly in Chinese. Suddenly a half a dozen young Chinese men in gray jumpsuits ran to the protestors and surrounded them.

Obama’s vehicle continued inside. When she left an hour later, the protestors were gone.

The first lady departs Beijing today for Xian in the interior of China, where she and her family will visit the ancient terracotta warriors site.

After a day there, she will travel to Chengdu, home to a research panda base.

“I’m going to be able to speak with more high school students there, really to see another region of the country and to speak to the students there, as well,” she said at the roundtable. “So I’m very excited.”

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Oil-leaking barge in Texas cleared of contents | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

Washington Post - Online, The

Texas

Oil-leaking barge cleared of contents

A barge that once carried about 900,000 gallons of heavy tar-like oil was cleared

Sunday of its remaining contents, a day after the vessel collided with a ship in the busy Houston Ship Channel and leaked as much as a quarter of its cargo into the waterway.

Coast Guard officials said that up to 168,000 gallons were dumped and that oil from the ruptured barge had been detected 12 miles offshore in the Gulf of Mexico as of Sunday afternoon.

“This is a significant spill,” Capt. Brian Penoyer, commander of the Coast Guard at Houston-Galveston, said.

But he said the emptying of the barge Sunday, a process known as lightering as contents are transferred to other vessels, was equally significant.

“The remaining risk of pollution, we've removed that,” he said.

More than 380 people — “and we've ordered more,” he said — plus a fleet of oil-retrieving skimmers and other vessels deploying containment booms around environmentally sensitive areas worked to mitigate the damage.

Officials said they had scattered reports of wildlife damage but no specifics. Some black tar-like globs, along with a dark line of a sticky, oily substance, could be detected along the shoreline of the Texas City dike, a 5-mile-long jetty that juts into Galveston Bay across from a tip of Galveston Island.

— Associated Press

New York

Treasury secretary

to undergo surgery

The Treasury Department said Secretary Jack Lew will undergo surgery Tuesday to treat a benign enlarged prostate.

The department said the procedure will be performed on an outpatient basis in New York.

Treasury spokeswoman Natalie Wyeth Earnest said in a statement Sunday that Lew is expected to remain at home in New York for the rest of the week. She said his physician expected him to be able to return to his full schedule the following week.

Lew has headed the Treasury Department for a year, taking over in 2013 from Timothy M. Geithner, who served during President Obama's first term.

— Associated Press

California

DMV probes possible security breach

California's Department of Motor Vehicles, which administers licenses for more than 24 million drivers, said it is investigating a potential security breach in its computerized credit card processing service.

The department, alerted by law enforcement to a possible

security issue, has no evidence of a direct breach of its computer system, spokesman Armando Botello said in a statement. The agency said it is conducting a forensic review and has contacted the company that processes its transactions, Atlanta-based Elavon.

“Out of an abundance of caution and in the interest of protecting the sensitive information of California drivers, the DMV has opened an investigation into any potential security breach in conjunction with state and

federal law enforcement,” Botello said.

— Bloomberg News

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Oil company endorses NV's proposed fracking rules | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

Washington Examiner - Online

ELKO, Nev. (AP) — A Houston-based oil company has endorsed the state's proposed rules governing hydraulic fracturing, better known as fracking.

The proposed regulations support proven technologies to safely develop Nevada's oil and gas, said Kevin Vorhaben of Noble Energy Inc., which is exploring for oil in three Elko County locations.

They also would ensure safety to human health and the environment, he said at a public workshop in Elko on Wednesday hosted by the Nevada Division of Minerals.

"These innovative proposed rules support the use of proven horizontal holes and hydraulic fracturing technologies to safely develop Nevada's discovered and undiscovered oil and gas resources," Vorhaben said, calling the regulations "tough" and "thorough."

But some residents viewed the company's endorsement as reason to wonder if the minerals division's proposed regulations are too lax, the Elko Daily Free Press reported (<http://bit.ly/1mlFsyF>).

"It really makes me uncomfortable to hear representatives of an oil company endorsing the regulations that you have and how great they are," said Richard Sturm of Elko County.

He noted BP's spill of millions of gallons of oil into the Gulf of Mexico occurred after a 2010 rig explosion despite regulations.

Shannon Salter, a Las Vegas poet, said the issue is "about doing possible permanent damage to the earth," and wealthy oil companies stand to gain from fracking.

Oil and gas developers employ hydraulic fracturing to boost production. The technique pumps water, fine sand and chemicals into wells to fracture open oil- and gas-bearing rock deposits.

The process has been controversial amid concern that fracking gone wrong could taint groundwater with hydrocarbons or fracking fluids containing toxic substances. The industry uses a variety of specially formulated fluids to facilitate fracking.

Among other provisions, the state's proposed rules call for testing underground aquifers before and during oil extraction. They also require companies to disclose chemicals used and to notify the public about fracking operations.

The Division of Minerals, which also held public workshops on its proposed regulations this week in Las Vegas and Carson City, is accepting online public comment on them through Friday.

Online:

The proposed regulations can be found at <http://www.minerals.state.nv.us>

Information from: Elko Daily Free Press, <http://www.elkodaily.com>

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Aquaculture workshop offers answers, raises new questions | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

Cape Gazette - Online

LEWES — Dagsboro resident Terry Murray would love to try his hand at oyster farming, but a recent public workshop did little to ease his concerns over how

Delaware's new aquaculture program is going to work.

Murray doesn't like the idea that a Delaware waterman with a proven track record of success will receive no preference when it comes to leasing land.

Raising the issue at a Feb. 26 workshop in Lewes, Murray asked state officials, "Why shouldn't the watermen get the first crack at it?" A waterman who has been fishing the Indian River Bay his whole life, he said, "I'm just worried that this program is not put together 100 percent."

Murray questions the process. If you're a watermelon farmer or raise cattle, you're going to get the same opportunity as an experienced waterman, he said, speaking to Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control representatives at the meeting.

Legislation creating shellfish aquaculture in Delaware was passed last year and DNREC is in the first stages of creating rules and regulations to implement the program.

Leases will be sold by the state to farm in Rehoboth, Indian River and Little Assawoman bays.

Murray was one of more than 50 people who attended a DNREC-sponsored workshop on the new program. This was the second workshop, and its purpose was to garner public comment.

Murray was the most vocal and raised the most concerns over potential issues.

"I'm going to bite the bullet and speak for the other watermen in here," he said. "If the state of Delaware is going to do aquaculture, why not get all the way involved?"

Stewart Michels, DNREC fisheries program manager, and Zina Hense, DNREC environmental scientist, did their best to answer his questions, but both reiterated many answers are not yet available.

Information that was available included leasing costs, total leased acreage allowed per applicant, the total percentage of bay land available for farming, and the species of shellfish allowed to be farmed.

Hense also presented information comparing start-up costs in Virginia and North Carolina that suggest an applicant can expect to spend between \$40,000 and \$60,000. She said these costs were just estimates and they could vary significantly depending on a handful of things, such as whether the applicant already has a boat or has the ability to built oyster cages.

The Center for the Inland Bays has identified locations in each of the three bays that

would be suitable for shellfish farming called Shellfish Aquaculture Development Areas.

In Rehoboth Bay, there are 260 acres among three locations that represent 4.3 percent of the total bay area. In Indian River Bay, there are 125 acres in two locations, representing 1.36 percent of total bay area. In Little Assawoman Bay, there are 227 acres among four locations that represent 9.3 percent of total bay area.

Michels said the goal is to streamline the process for applicants who want to farm in these identified areas, saying permits would almost be rubber-stamped as long as the applicant fits the criteria.

Farmers can raise shellfish outside the development areas, but a lot of the burden will be on them, Michels said, specifically pointing to getting approval from the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers and DNREC wetland permits.

Increasing recreational traffic on the bays was an issue brought up by numerous people, but that issue didn't concern everyone.

Billy Lucas of Dewey Beach grew up on the waters of Rehoboth Bay, which is where he would like to get a lease.

"It's so shallow right there. There's not going to be a boating problem," he said.

Lucas is excited about the opportunity to farm shellfish in Rehoboth Bay.

"I think we'll be able to grow oysters in there. It would be great," he said. "The problem is, I think everyone is going to figure that out also and want to go there too."

The next step in the shellfish farming program is the formal regulation process, which requires public notices and public hearings.

Michels wasn't sure when then process would start.

"It's a matter of converting the comments we've received into draft regulations, and I'm not certain how long it will take us. There's still a lot of work to do," he said.

Dave Saveikis, DNREC Division of Fish & Wildlife director, said the goal is to have the program in place by this summer and to begin accepting lease applications by July.

Aquaculture by the numbers:

- Minimum lease acreage is one acre and the maximum any one applicant can apply for is five acres within Rehoboth and Indian River bays combined. An applicant who leases up to five acres in Rehoboth and/or Indian River bay may also lease an

additional one to five acres in Little Assawoman Bay.

- The application fee for an aquaculture lease is \$300. The annual fee for a lease is \$100 an acre for a Delaware resident and \$1,000 an acre for a nonresidents.
- Initially farmers will be permitted to harvest the Eastern oyster in all three bays and hard clams in Little Assawoman Bay.
- Leases issued in Rehoboth and Indian River bays will not exceed 5 percent of the total subaqueous lands within each bay. In Little Assawoman Bay, the maximum allowable acreage for leasing will not exceed 10 percent of the subaqueous lands.

More than 50 people went to a DNREC workshop in Lewes on the state's new aquaculture program on Feb. 26. (Photo by: Chris Flood)

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N.C. wants to nix Duke Energy's \$99,000 settlement for coal ash leaks | [View Clip](#)
03/23/2014
Baltimore Sun - Online

The nation's largest electricity provider could soon be back on the hook for a once-settled lawsuit alleging that it illegally contaminated groundwater through leaky coal ash dumps near Charlotte and Asheville in North Carolina.

State regulators had agreed to accept a \$99,000 fine from Charlotte-based Duke Energy as part of an order that didn't include a requirement for the company to clean up its mess.

But on Friday, the the state's Department of Environment and Natural Resources said it was asking for a judge to throw out that settlement, citing another judge's ruling this month that the agency was relying on bad legal advice when it agreed to the deal.

“We intend for our lawsuits against Duke Energy to move forward,” John Skvarla, the agency's secretary, said in a statement. “We will continue to hold the utility accountable.”

The terms of the deal were negotiated based on the state lawyers' interpretation of groundwater rules. Wake County Superior Court Judge Paul Ridgeway found the reading of the law to be wrong.

The lawsuit stems from spills at coal ash dumps last spring at the Asheville Steam Electric Generating Plant and the Riverbend Steam Station. The state later filed additional lawsuits, which are still pending, against Duke Energy for similar

environmental violations at 12 other spots in the state.

Duke Energy is also facing legal action involving a spill in February that left miles of toxic sludge along at least 70 miles of the Dan River. And it was cited this week for contaminating water near Cape Fear River.

The state plans to partner with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to address concerns about Duke Energy, officials said Friday. The EPA has been separately considering criminal charges.

“The state's goal is to clean up both the Dan River and to protect public health and the environment at the other Duke Energy facilities around the state, and we are pleased to announce that the EPA will join us as we address these important issues,” Gov. Pat McCrory, who worked for the company for 28 years, said in a statement.

“Participation by the EPA will bring additional resources to help us resolve a difficult problem that spans more than six decades.”

Environmentalists lashed out against the governor last year, saying he gave Duke Energy a lenient deal.

The state said Friday that Duke Energy had hired a contractor to start removing two deposits of ash from the Dan River. Meanwhile, a contractor fixing a boat ramp along the river struck a dredge line, the state said, causing a new discharge that could lead to further penalties.

At Cape Fear, regulators on Friday approved Duke Energy's emergency plan to stop a mix of water and coal ash from falling into the earth from a crack that formed this week.

The wastewater is formed after the utility burns coal to generate electricity. The waste is held in deposits that have formed leaks. Environmental protection groups have said that the coal ash needs to be stored in well-protected areas far from bodies of water.

Duke Energy, valued at nearly \$50 billion on the New York Stock Exchange, has seen the price of its shares fall more than 3% during the last month, to \$69.08.

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Family gets \$1.4 million over electrocution at Georgia college

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N.C. regulators again cite Duke Energy over coal ash | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

Baltimore Sun - Online

FAYETTEVILLE, N.C. — North Carolina regulators cited Duke Energy on Thursday, saying the utility deliberately dumped 61 million gallons of toxic coal ash waste into a tributary of the Cape Fear River, which provides drinking water for several cities and towns in the state.

The state Department of Environment and Natural Resources said the giant utility, responsible for a massive spill from a different coal ash containment pond Feb. 2, had illegally pumped the ash from two coal ash ponds at its Cape Fear plant in Moncure, N.C., and into a canal that feeds into the Cape Fear River.

Regulators said they caught Duke pumping the toxic ash March 11, one day after an environmental group took aerial photographs of what it said were pumps illegally dumping the waste. Environmental groups have accused the agency of coddling Duke Energy and allowing coal ash waste to seep for years from the utility's 14 coal-fired plants in the state.

The state agency said Duke Energy had been getting away with the dumping by telling regulators it was part of routine maintenance. Regulators said inspectors had determined that 44 million gallons of toxic waste had been pumped from one pond for 78 days, and 17 million gallons pumped from a second pond at the site for 31 days.

"We were notified by phone in August that Duke Energy intended to conduct routine maintenance work at these ash ponds," said Tom Reeder, director of the state Division of Water Resources. "The state's investigation revealed that the pumping activities ongoing at this plant far exceeded what would reasonably be considered routine maintenance."

The agency said it had notified downstream municipal water agencies of the dumping, but said they had not reported any problems with drinking water so far. Regulators said they were taking water samples at sites on the Cape Fear River, which runs through Fayetteville on its way to the coast near Wilmington, N.C.

The plant where the pumping took place is in central North Carolina, about 30 miles southwest of the state capital, Raleigh.

Late Thursday, regulators said they were responding to a report of a crack in an earthen dam that holds in coal ash waste at the Cape Fear plant.

Duke Energy used two pumps to bypass vertical spillway pipes, known as risers, that

drain off excess surface water during heavy rains. But using the pumps risked dredging up dangerous heavy metals that settle at the bottom of the ponds.

Regulators said Duke illegally pumped so much water out of the ponds that "the impoundments no longer properly function as treatment systems."

Duke Energy, the nation's largest electric utility, also has been cited by state regulators for the Feb. 2 spill, which coated the Dan River with toxic coal ash sludge on the North Carolina-Virginia border for at least 70 miles. The state agency has sued the utility in state court alleging coal ash violations, precluding attempts by environmental groups to sue Duke Energy in federal court alleging violation of the Clean Water Act.

Duke Energy officials did not respond to a request for comment Thursday.

Coal ash is produced when coal is burned to create electricity.

Duke has 30 days to respond to the state's citation. After that, regulators could impose a fine of up to \$25,000 a day for each violation. Duke is a \$50-billion corporation.

Environmentalists accuse the agency of being too cozy with Duke as part of new leadership installed by a Republican takeover of state government. The current director, appointed by Republican Gov. Pat McCrory — who was a 28-year Duke employee — has downplayed enforcement and said the agency should serve "partners" and "customers" like Duke.

The Waterkeeper Alliance, an environmental group, took aerial photographs March 10 of what it said was illegal pumping and pressured state regulators to punish Duke Energy. The state agency, known as DENR, said inspectors visited the Cape Fear plant the day after the photos were taken as part of a statewide inspection of coal ash ponds after the Feb. 2 spill, which was the third-largest in U.S. history.

Peter Harrison, staff attorney for the Waterkeeper Alliance, criticized Duke for the dumping and state regulators for not cracking down on Duke over the Dan River spill and what he said had been years of illegal seepage from the utility's coal ash ponds.

"The only thing more disturbing than DENR's slow, carefree response in the wake of Dan River is Duke's audacious, clandestine pollution," Harrison said.

Harrison said state regulators were shown the photographs. He accused the agency of claiming that it had stumbled upon the violations "by some great coincidence."

Environmental groups have been pressing the state for years to require utilities to move coal ash from wet lagoons near waterways to dry, lined landfills away from sources of drinking water.

"If the Cape Fear coal ash were stored in a safe, dry, lined landfill away from the river, the Cape Fear River would not have been polluted, and Duke Energy would not be facing this latest legal problem," said Frank Holleman, an attorney with the Southern Environmental Law Center.

david.zucchino@latimes.com

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In Mississippi, a power plant is designed to shape the future of coal | [View Clip](#)
03/23/2014
Baltimore Sun - Online

DE KALB, Miss. — Looming like a spaceship over pine and sweet-gum forest, the high-tech power plant under construction in rural Kemper County is a \$5-billion wager on an energy future that includes coal.

The Kemper plant is scheduled to open this year as the first in the United States to ramp up technology to remove carbon dioxide emissions on a large scale. If it works as planned, up to 65% of the plant's potential carbon dioxide emissions would be removed.

But if its progress is any indication, building a coal plant that can sharply reduce greenhouse gas pollution is a white-knuckle ride. The project is five months behind schedule and more than \$2 billion over budget. The cost overruns have increased electricity bills in southeastern Mississippi, stirred stiff opposition from consumers and environmentalists, and contributed to a downgrade in the credit rating outlook for Southern Co., the plant's parent corporation.

Related: Duke Energy receives 5 more citations weeks after coal ash spill

The U.S. Energy Department has spent \$270 million on the project — part of \$3.4 billion in federal stimulus funds allocated to carbon-capture demonstration projects since 2009 — yet it remains unclear, according to some analysts familiar with the project, whether the Kemper plant will work as planned.

The carbon-capture plant and four others on the drawing boards, including one near Bakersfield, are cited by Obama administration officials as evidence that coal can remain part of the president's "all of the above" energy strategy. But many power companies and environmentalists think the administration's proposed standards for greenhouse gas emissions would all but eliminate coal power despite huge investments in the new technology.

Dalia Patino Echeverri, an assistant professor of energy systems and public policy at Duke University, said the new rules would "put coal at a huge disadvantage," noting

that the technology to capture and store carbon dioxide "is still an expensive, uncertain proposition."

Six years into the project, Southern is careful not to tout Kemper as a model that could easily be replicated. "To say there is a one-size-fits-all, that what we do here is applicable someplace else, would probably not be accurate," said Amoi Geter, a spokeswoman for Mississippi Power, the Southern Co. subsidiary building the plant.

In Kemper County, northeast of Jackson, Southern found an unusual cluster of advantages. The plant stands at the mouth of a mine for lignite coal, a cheap fuel. Kemper will use inexpensive treated wastewater in its power generation process. Most importantly, it will make money from the removed carbon dioxide by piping it to two companies that will inject it into the ground to force oil from old wells.

Coal-fired power plants are the single largest source of heat-trapping carbon dioxide in the United States. In September, the Environmental Protection Agency proposed standards for new power plants that would limit carbon dioxide output from coal plants to 1,100 pounds per megawatt hour, down from the current industry average of about 1,800 pounds, a reduction that would require new technology such as that being attempted at Kemper.

Those rules could accelerate the already dramatic shift to natural gas. The price of gas has fallen sharply as hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, has increased supplies, and plants can be built quickly and cheaply.

But natural gas prices have been wildly volatile in the past, and the United States has the world's largest reserves of recoverable coal, a fuel whose prices have historically been low and relatively stable.

"If you think that it's a sound bet that coal will be part of the future of the country, if you have an interest in coal, and companies like Southern do, it makes good business sense to develop technology that lets you use the resource in way that is socially acceptable," said Edward S. Rubin, a professor of engineering and public policy at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh.

The 582-megawatt Kemper project will generate enough electricity to serve 189,000 customers. A smaller plant is under construction in Saskatchewan, Canada. About 24 power plants around the world are in the planning phase, according to the Carbon Capture and Sequestration Technologies Program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Carbon-capture technology is not new. Refineries and some U.S. power plants have used it on a small scale. Gasified coal, the fuel Kemper will burn, is used at other plants too. But Kemper has a new gasification system. Its operating plan significantly scales up and combines all the technology.

"There won't be clear takeaways for the rest of industry until the plant starts operating," Rubin said. "The first takeaway will be, does it work?"

A leader in carbon-capture research, Southern intends for Kemper to replace older coal plants. The project was wreathed in high hopes. Former Energy Secretary Steven Chu wrote, "This project is of national importance because it provides a viable option for using our abundant coal resources in a cost-effective and clean manner."

High cranes swing over the construction site, which is a tangle of bright silver galvanized steel pipes around the chambers where the carbon is captured. Kemper is far larger than conventional coal plants, in part because a chemical plant and refinery-like towers have been grafted onto it. If successful, Kemper will strip away 65% of the carbon, significantly more than the proposed EPA requirement of about 40%.

At Kemper, pulverized coal will be turned into gas by combusting the fuel in a chamber where low oxygen levels will keep it from burning. The gas will be piped into tall columns, where it will rise through a fine rain of the solvent Selexol, which binds carbon dioxide molecules to it.

The carbon dioxide will be separated from the Selexol by reducing the pressure in a chamber that holds the mixture, similar to the way carbon dioxide is released from a soda can when it is opened. The coal gas will be burned to make steam that drives turbines.

Given the novelty of weaving together the carbon capture and new coal gasification technology and building it on a large scale, it remains unknown whether the plant will operate reliably, without frequent forced outages, and also manage to cut emissions at planned levels, Rubin said.

The project was budgeted for \$2.4 billion, or about \$1 billion more than a conventional coal plant. But Kemper's cost ballooned to more than \$5 billion because of changes in design, miscalculations about the amount of materials needed and bad weather that slowed work.

Southern wrote down \$1 billion, but Mississippi Power's customers are still carrying some costs. The state Legislature passed a law that allows Southern to recoup costs from ratepayers before the plant produces power and another that lets Mississippi Power issue \$1 billion in bonds. Kemper now accounts for about 16% of an average monthly residential electric bill.

The fate of the other four planned U.S. carbon-capture plants remains unclear, said Howard J. Herzog, a senior research engineer with the MIT Energy Initiative. The Energy Department is financing between 10% and 50% of their costs, but if construction does not begin by mid-2015, when the funding runs out, the projects would lose that money.

"There's a realistic chance that one or all may never get built," Herzog said.

Some experts, like Echeverri, believe the price of carbon-capture technology will come down. But the risks and high costs of being a trailblazer mean "no one wants to be among the first 10 plants," she said. "If your choice is that you can start a plant with proven technology like a natural gas plant or unproven expensive technology, you will build a gas plant."

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Wide Variety of Free Flicks Across D.C. Region | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

CBS DC- Online

Morning Anchor - 5 to 10 a.m. (@nhagerwnew) Nathan Hager bring...

This week, it's all about variety in the local free movie scene.

From movies for kids, to superhero action films, to sophisticated dramas for adults, to films featuring the late Philip Seymour Hoffman, the choices abound.

The Environmental Film Festival in the Nation's Capital also continues this week; while many of the films on that schedule cost money, the ones listed below are all free.

Here is the full list of free movies for the week starting Saturday, March 22nd:

Saturday:

10am: "Tangled" (2010). A plucky young lady with extraordinarily long hair longs to be free from her tower. Saturday Morning Movie Time at Maryland City at Russett Library, 3501 Russett Common, Laurel, Md.

10:15am: "Amelia" (2009). Starring Hilary Swank as pioneering pilot Amelia Earhart. A Women's History Month movie at Germantown Library, 19840 Century Blvd., Germantown, Md.

1pm: "The Hunger Games" (2012). A defiant teenager takes her younger sister's place in a fight to the death with other children. A Movie Matinee at Southwest Library, 900 Wesley Pl., SW, Washington, DC.

1:30pm: "Man of Steel" (2013). A brooding reboot of the Superman saga. Playing at Southeast Anchor Library, 3601 Eastern Ave., Baltimore, Md.

2pm: "Thor" (2011). A powerful but arrogant demigod is banished to earth. A descriptive video presentation for the blind at Central Library, 409 Cathedral St., Baltimore, Md.

2pm: "Despicable Me 2" (2013). Gru is recruited to fight a new super villain. A Family Movie at East Columbia Library, 6600 Cradlerock Way, Columbia, Md.

2pm: "Frozen" (2013). A tomboyish princess goes on an adventure to free her village from an eternal winter accidentally unleashed by her powerful yet vulnerable sister. Hit Movie Saturday at Brooklyn Park Library, 1 E. 11th Ave., Baltimore, Md.

2pm: "Monsters University" (2013). Mike and Sully's college days. A Family Movie at Shirlington Library, 4200 Campbell Ave., Arlington, Va.

2pm: "Akeelah and the Bee" (2006). A young girl from a rough section of Los Angeles tries to make it in the National Spelling Bee. A Women's History Month movie at Burke Library, 4701 Seminary Rd., Alexandria, Va.

7pm: Cylon Happy Hour at the Black Cat. This week's episode of "Battlestar Galactica:" "Kobol's Last Gleaming (Part 1)," from season 1. 1811 14th St., NW.

7:30pm: "Housesitter" (1992). A beautiful con artist moves into a strait-laced architect's empty home and pretends to be his wife. Playing at the Library of Congress Packard Theater, 19053 Mount Pony Rd., Culpeper, Va.

At the Environmental Film Festival:

10:30am: Several films: "The Rooster Trademark Paper" (2012). A boy wants to enter an art contest, but there's a catch: the entries must be submitted on very expensive paper. Then, at 2pm, Four films on the pleasures of walking: "All This Can Happen" (2012), "Boardwalk" (1972), "A Journey to Avebury" (1971) and "Rain (Regen)" (1929). Finally, at 4:30pm, "Breathing Earth: Susumu Shingu's Dream" (2012). A sculptor who strives to commune with nature through art. Playing at the National Gallery of Art's East Building Auditorium, 4th St. and Constitution Ave., NW, Washington, DC.

11am: "Return Flight" (2013). Restoring the bald eagle on southern California's Channel Islands. Playing at the National Wildlife Visitors Center, 10901 Scarlet Tanager Loop, Laurel, Md.

12pm: Three films for children: "Blackout" (2013) "Cloudette" (2013) and "Bear Has a Story to Tell" (2013). Playing at Hill Center at the Old Naval Hospital, 921 Pennsylvania Ave., SE, Washington, DC.

12pm: A double-feature: first, "The Great Flood" (2013), about the Mississippi River

Flood of 1927; then at 3pm, “Mission Blue” (2014), about one oceanographer's mission to save the seas. Playing at the National Museum of Natural History's Baird Auditorium, 10th St. and Constitution Ave., NW, Washington, DC.

1pm: “Backyard Bugs” (2014). A look at the vast biodiversity right outside your door. Playing at Hill Center at the Old Naval Hospital, 921 Pennsylvania Ave., SE, Washington, DC.

1pm: “Shored Up” (2013). People in coastal cities face the stark, often dangerous, consequences of climate change. Playing at the National Museum of American History's Warner Bros. Theater, 14th St. and Constitution Ave., NW, Washington, DC.

2pm: “Slums: Cities of Tomorrow” (2013). A tour through some of the poorest, and most resilient, cities on the planet. Playing at Petworth Library, 4200 Kansas Ave., NW, Washington, DC.

2pm: “Beyond Beauty: Taiwan from Above” (2013). A bird's-eye view of the island nation's natural landscape. Playing at the Freer Gallery's Meyer Auditorium, 1050 Independence Ave., SE, Washington, DC.

Sunday:

2pm: “Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom” (1984). Indy stumbles upon a secret cult while searching for a mystical stone. Playing at the historic State Theatre, 305 S. Main St., Culpeper, Va.

3pm: “High Tech Low Life” (2012). A film that follows two of China's first citizen-journalists. An Insights Documentary screening at Columbia Pike Library, 816 S. Walter Reed Dr., Arlington, Va.

6pm: “Mulan” (1998). A headstrong young woman disguises herself as a man to take her aging father's place in China's war with the Huns. Women's History Month Movie Night at West End Library, 1101 24th St., NW.

8pm: “The Princess Bride” (1987). The hilarious fairy tale of inconceivably brilliant Sicilians, farmboys-turned-dread-pirates, and Rodents of Unusual Size. Part of “Fantasy Flicks!” month at Tallula EatBar, 2761 Washington Blvd., Arlington, Va.

At the Environmental Film Festival:

11:30am: “The Rooster Trademark Paper” (2012). A repeat screening. Then, at 4pm, “Cousin Jules” (1971), a documentary shot over five years about an elderly farmer, his wife, and their simple way of living off the land. Playing at the National Gallery of Art's East Building Auditorium, 4th St. and Constitution Ave., NW, Washington, DC.

12pm: A series of films that highlight humanity's sometimes detrimental impact on the world. First, "Critical Mass" (2012) compares experiments on rat overpopulation to humans; at 4pm "Expedition to the End of the World" (2013) follows a tall ship to northeast Greenland's dwindling ice pack; then at 6:30pm, "Extreme Realities" (2014), an episode of "Journey to Planet Earth" that explores the nexus of extreme weather and national security. Playing at the National Museum of Natural History's Baird Auditorium, 10th St. and Constitution Ave., NW, Washington, DC.

12pm: "Standing on Sacred Ground" (2013). A four-part series that examines how native traditions can lead to a more sustainable planet. Playing at the National Museum of the American Indian, 4th St. and Jefferson Dr., SW, Washington, DC.

12pm: Four short films about making cities more sustainable: "Our Power" (2014), "Portrait of an Urban Beekeeper" (2014) "Power to the Pedals: Wenzday Jane and the Culture of Change" (2014) and "Dutch Weed Burger" (2014). Playing at the Carnegie Institution for Science, 1530 P St., NW, Washington, DC.

12pm: "Ground Operations: Battlefields to Farmfields" (2012). Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan create new lives as organic farmers. Playing at Hill Center at the Old Naval Hospital, 921 Pennsylvania Ave., SE, Washington, DC.

2pm: "Black Out" (2012). Teens vie for an education in a part of the world where electricity is at a premium. Playing at the Francis A. Gregory Library, 3660 Alabama Ave., SE, Washington, DC.

Monday:

5pm: "Blade" (1998). Wesley Snipes stars as the half-vampire, half-mortal vampire hunter. Playing at Pennsylvania Avenue Library, 1531 W. North Ave., Baltimore, Md.

6pm: "Zu Warriors" (2001). Immortals fight to protect their mystical mountain home from a renegade invader. Playing at Herring Run Library, 3801 Erdman Ave., Baltimore, Md.

6pm: "The Thomas Crown Affair" (1999). A rich art thief meets his match in the form of a gorgeous detective. Fiction Lover's Film Companion at the Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial Library, 901 G St., NW, Washington, DC.

6pm: "The Place Beyond the Pines" (2012). A motorcycle stunt rider robs banks to try to support his family, until an ambitious rookie cop tries to stop him. Part of a series of Oscar winners and nominees at Westover Library, 1644 N. McKinley Rd., Ste. 3, Arlington, Va.

7:30pm: "The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel" (2011). A group of elderly British friends

finds the hotel they've booked in India isn't quite what they'd expected. Part of the Aspen Hill Library Film Festival, 4407 Aspen Hill Rd., Rockville, Md.

8pm: "Human Highway" (1982). The owner of a diner near a leaking nuclear plant has unexpected trouble torching the place for the insurance. Starring and co-directed by Neil Young. Hosted by the Washington Psychotronic Film Society at McFadden's, 2401 Pennsylvania Ave, NW.

At the Environmental Film Festival:

10:30am: Three films for children: "Blackout" (2013) "Cloudette" (2013) and "Bear Has a Story to Tell" (2013). Repeats at 11:30am at Takoma Park Library, 416 Cedar St., NW, Washington, DC.

7pm: "The Last Shepherd (L'Ultimo Pastore)" (2012). A shepherd in the Lombardy region defends his way of life from urban sprawl. Playing at the Embassy of Italy, 3000 Whitehaven St., NW, Washington, DC.

7:30pm: "Thomas Berry: The Great Story" (2002). A documentary about the eco-theologian. Playing at Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church, 1 Chevy Chase Cir., NW, Washington, DC.

Tuesday:

4:30pm: "Charlotte's Web" (2006). A young farm girl saves a runt pig from slaughter, with the help of a talking spider. A Reel Reading Movie Night at Rosedale Library, 1701 Gales St., NE, Washington, DC.

6pm: "Battle of the Year: The Dream Team" (2013). An underdog team of B-boy dancers go for glory in a major competition. Playing at Orleans Street Library, 1303 Orleans St., Baltimore, Md.

6pm: "Legend of the Guardians: The Owls of Ga'Hoole" (2010). A young owl seeks the help of the Guardians after he escapes the clutches of an evil owl army. Playing at Elkridge Library, 6540 Washington Blvd., Elkridge, Md.

6pm: A series of films timed to Women's History Month continues at Georgetown Library, 3260 R St., NW. Call (202) 727-0232 for details on "Herstory."

6pm: "Children of Men" (2006). A reluctant man helps to protect the world's lone pregnant woman in a future where children no longer exist. Part of a series of Oscar winners and nominees at Central Library, 1015 N. Quincy St., Arlington, Va.

6:30pm: Movie Request Tuesday at William O. Lockridge/Bellevue Library, 115 Atlantic St., SW. Call (202) 243-1185 for details.

7pm: “Faat Kiné” (2001). How women fit into an independent Senegal. A \$10 donation is requested at Bloombars, 3222 11th St. NW. RSVP [here](#).

At the Environmental Film Festival:

12pm: “On the Edge, Antarctica 3D” (2014). Getting up close with the bottom of the world. Playing at the National Geographic Society, 1600 M St., NW.

12pm: “Scaling the Mountain: Protecting Forests for Families in Nepal” (2014). Fighting deforestation in the foothills of Nepal. Playing at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC.

6pm: “Helsinki Music Centre: Prelude” (2012). The architects of Helsinki's new concert hall set out to create a building in harmony with its surroundings. Playing at the Embassy of Finland, 3301 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC.

6pm: A double-feature. First, “Tokyo's Belly” (2013), a look inside the sewers of Japan's capital. Then, at 7:30pm, “The Venice Syndrome” (2013). Italy's sinking city is also losing residents. Playing at the Goethe-Institut, 812 7th St., NW, Washington, DC.

6:30pm: A screening of winners of the Eco-Comedy Video Competition at American University's Forman Theater, 4400 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC.

6:30pm: “Escaping the Flood” (2006). Rising sea levels threaten a Dutch village. Playing at the Royal Netherlands Embassy, 4200 Linnean Ave., NW, Washington, DC.

6:30pm: Three short films on urban centers moving back to rural lifestyles: “India's Toxic Tanneries” (2013), “Monotown: Asbest” (2013) and “Down to the Countryside” (2013). Playing at the Carnegie Institution for Science, 1530 P St., NW, Washington, DC.

6:30pm: A double-feature on pets: first, “The Paw Project (2013), about the grassroots fight against cat declawing; then, at 8pm: “Parrot Confidential” (2013), stories of feral birds in need of homes. Playing at the Atlas Performing Arts Center, 1333 H St., NE.

7:30pm: “The Ghosts in Our Machine” (2013). The stories of individual animals locked in humanity's mechanized world. Playing at Gallaudet University, 800 Florida Ave., NE, Washington, DC.

Wednesday:

3:45pm: “The Princess Bride” (1987). If you missed it Sunday, it's playing as a teen matinee at Burke Library, 4701 Seminary Rd., Alexandria, Va.

6pm: "Charlie Wilson's War" (2007). How a brash Texas congressman may have helped to lay the seeds for radicalism in Afghanistan. Part of a series of Oscar winners and nominees at Central Library, 1015 N. Quincy St., Arlington, Va.

At the Environmental Film Festival:

10:30am: Three films for children: "Blackout" (2013) "Cloudette" (2013) and "Bear Has a Story to Tell" (2013). Playing at Deanwood Library, 1350 49th St., NE, Washington, DC.

6pm: A double-feature. First, two episodes of the German series "Ecopia" (2013). Then, at 7:30pm, "Food Savers" (2013), a look at why the developed world wastes so much good food. Playing at the Goethe-Institut, 812 7th St., NW, Washington, DC.

6:30pm: "Kangaroo Dundee" (2013). A man on a mission to save orphaned kangaroos in Australia's Outback. Playing at the Embassy of Australia, 1601 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC.

6:30pm: "Satoyama: Japan's Secret Forest" (2008). How Japan's small forests may point the way to a more sustainable future. Playing at the Embassy of Japan, 1150 18th St., NW, Washington, DC.

6:30pm: "A Matter of Life and Death" (2014). A work-in-progress about Jane Jacobs, author of the 1961 book "The Death and Life of Great American Cities." Director Matt Tyrnauer will attend the screening at the National Portrait Gallery's McEvoy Auditorium, 8th and G Sts., NW, Washington, DC.

7pm: "A2-B-C" (2013). The Fukushima nuclear meltdown's devastating effect on children. Playing at Georgetown University's Edward B. Bunn Intercultural Center Auditorium, 37th and O Sts., NW, Washington, DC.

7pm: A Student Environmental Short Film Festival at American University's Forman Theater, 4400 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC.

7pm: "Toxic Hot Seat" (2013). How dangerous flame retardants have managed to stay in America's homes despite the dangers they pose. Playing at the Carnegie Institution for Science, 1530 P St., NW, Washington, DC.

7:15pm: "Growing Cities" (2013). Urban farming on the rise in America. Playing at the George Washington University Marvin Center, 800 21st St., NW, Washington, DC.

Thursday:

3pm: "A Late Quartet" (2012). Dire forces threaten to tear a famed string ensemble

apart. Part of the series “Starring Philip Seymour Hoffman” at Columbia Pike Library, 816 S. Walter Reed Dr., Arlington, Va.

6pm: “Madadayo” (1993). An aging professor celebrates his birthday in post-war Tokyo. A Thursday Night Film at the Walters Art Museum, 600 N. Charles St., Baltimore, Md.

7:30pm: “The Master” (2012). A Navy veteran haunted by war is drawn into a cult. Playing at the Library of Congress Packard Theater, 19053 Mount Pony Rd., Culpeper, Va.

At the Environmental Film Festival:

12pm: A couple of films. First, “The City” (1939). A film about urban planning, made for the 1939 World's Fair, which still resonates today. Then, at 7pm: “HR6161: An Act of Congress” (1979). Following an amendment to the Clean Air Act from bill to law. Playing at the National Archives William G. McGowan Theater, 7th St. and Constitution Ave., NW, Washington, DC.

4pm: A double feature. First, “Atomic Africa: Clean Energy's Dirty Secrets” (2013). The dark side of nuclear power. Then, at 7pm, “Sandgrains” (2013). Erosion tears at a man's childhood home. Playing at the University of the District of Columbia, 4200 Connecticut Ave., NW, Washington, DC.

6:30pm: “The Lithium Revolution” (2012). A look at riding global demand for the potential energy source. Playing at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, 1740 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC.

6:30pm: “A Boom with No Boundaries” (2013). A short film on North Dakota's oil boom. Playing at the Center for American Progress, 1333 H St., NW, Washington, DC.

6:30pm: “The Man Who Plants Trees” (2013). One man's quest to save his tribal homeland's rainforests. Playing at the Embassy of the Czech Republic, 3900 Spring of Freedom St., NW, Washington, DC.

6:30pm: “It's All True” (1993). Orson Welles's ill-fated attempt to make a film about South America. Playing at the Inter-American Development Bank, 1330 New York Ave., NW, Washington, DC.

6:30pm: “White Gold” (2013). An exposé of the modern-day ivory trade. Playing at Howard University's Blackburn Student Center, 2397 6th St., NW, Washington, DC.

7pm: “Battle for Bats: Surviving White Nose Syndrome” (2013). An epidemic among winged mammals. Playing at the U.S. Department of the Interior, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC.

7pm: A series of short films under the heading “Stories from the Small Red Dot” will play at the Embassy of Singapore, 3501 International Pl., NW, Washington, DC.

8pm: “The Weather War” (2012). A pair of Swedish artists head to America's tornado alley with a sculpture they claim can stop twisters. Playing at the Hirshhorn Museum, 7th St. and Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC.

Friday:

10am “A Bug's Life” (1998). A resourceful ant enlists circus bugs to fight a gang of thuggish grasshoppers. A Family Movie Morning at Deale Library, 5940 Deale-Churchton Rd., Deale, Md.

2pm: “The Hunger Games” (2012). If you missed it Saturday, see it as part of a series of Oscar winners and nominees at Central Library, 1015 N. Quincy St., Arlington, Va.

7pm: “Gasland Part II” (2013). The rising stakes of hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking.” Part of Meaningful Movies: Olney at the Buffington Building Community Room, 3300 Olney Sandy Spring Rd., Olney, Md.

7pm: Dr. Who Happy Hour at the Black Cat. This week's episode: “The Doctor, the Widow and the Wardrobe,” the Christmas special from 2011. 1811 14th St., NW.

7:30pm: “Capote” (2005). Philip Seymour Hoffman won the Best Actor Oscar for his uncanny portrayal of the flamboyant author. Playing at the Library of Congress Packard Theater, 19053 Mount Pony Rd., Culpeper, Va.

At the Environmental Film Festival:

6:30pm: “The Latin Skyscraper (El Rascacielos Latino)” (2012). Unraveling the mysteries of the Barolo Palace in Buenos Aires. Playing at the Embassy of Argentina, 1600 New Hampshire Ave., NW, Washington, DC.

6:30pm: “Drill Baby Drill” (2013). A village in eastern Poland fights to stop shale gas drilling in their midst. Playing at the Anacostia Community Museum, 1901 Fort Pl., SE, Washington, DC.

6:30pm: “Last Call” (2013). Is it too late to reverse the impact of human population growth? Playing at the National Museum of Natural History's Baird Auditorium, 10th St. and Constitution Ave., NW, Washington, DC.

6:30pm: “Why in My Backyard: Hidroaysen” (2012). A documentary about a hydroelectric plant that might not be the godsend Chile needs. Then, at 8pm, several shorts about environmental challenges in the Dominican Republic. Playing at the GALA Hispanic Theatre, 3333 14th St., NW, Washington, DC.

6:45pm: A double-feature. First, “Stop! Rodando el Cambio” (2014). A road trip through a simpler side of Europe. Then, at 8pm, “Roaming Wild” (2014). Wild horses run up against encroaching development in the American West. Playing at American University's Forman Theater, 4400 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC.

WNEW's Nathan Hager contributed to this report. Follow him and WNEW on Twitter.

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DEP: Drillers extract thousands of tons of hot rocks | [View Clip](#)
03/23/2014
Cumberland Times-News - Online

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Environmental watchdogs say a system for tracking radioactive material unearthed during gas drilling depends too much on the industry's self-policing, making it impossible to judge how much waste is generated or how dangerous it might be.

Their concern centers on cuttings — the rock unearthed during the drilling process.

Deepest rocks are sometimes radioactive. They may become more volatile when exposed to chemicals used during fracking, the popular process for releasing underground reservoirs of natural gas, said Nadia Steinzor, program coordinator for the Oil and Gas Accountability Project of the nonprofit group Earthworks.

During 2012, an estimated 4,175 tons of cuttings were radioactive, said Morgan Wagner, a state Department of Environmental Protection spokeswoman. The DEP does not have an estimate for how much radioactive material was unearthed last year, Wagner said.

Environmentalists say the state's estimates — when they exist — are difficult to verify.

“We don't know the scope of the problem,” said Adam Garber, field director for PennEnvironment. “... It's only (going) to get worse.”

Responding to such concerns, DEP has launched a \$1 million study to measure where radioactive materials are turning up and how they are handled, Wagner said. As of the end of last year, researchers had visited 114 locations across the state, and collected close to 1,000 samples. DEP is expected to release their findings this summer.

Mark Pedersen, president of the Pennsylvania Waste Industries Association, which represents haulers and landfill operators, said those who manage waste from the

drilling operations believe there are sufficient checks in place.

“There are two-to-three sets of eyes on everything,” Pedersen said.

Environmentalists say a handful of episodes have heightened concerns about drilling waste.

Two years ago, state regulators identified “several containers” of waste that were so radioactive, state officials required it to be moved out of state, Wagner said. Those 308 tons of waste were ultimately sent to a facility for radioactive waste disposal in Idaho. Wagner said the problem came to light when the drilling company submitted paperwork seeking to move the waste to a landfill, which is the most common way that radioactive waste is identified.

Then, last April, a Westmoreland County landfill rejected a load of drilling waste when it triggered a radiation alarm. That load was also reportedly shipped to Idaho.

Earlier this month, regulators in North Dakota reported finding black trash bags stuffed with radioactive “drilling socks” — filters used to strain liquid during the drilling process. The Pennsylvania DEP is studying the use and disposal of the same type of filters as part of its study.

A DEP website that tracks the disposal of Marcellus waste includes no reference to either the 2012 or 2013 Idaho shipments. Steinzor said that data gap is typical because the state's system relies on self-reporting by gas drillers.

Data provided by drilling companies show a staggering amount of waste.

Pennsylvania landfills last year accepted 785,000 tons of drill cuttings. Another 81,000 tons were shipped across the border into New York.

Residents there must confront the irony that their state has a moratorium on fracking due its perceived environmental threat, but New York still accepts waste from drilling in Pennsylvania, said Gary Alexander. An attorney, Alexander represents residents who've been fighting to stop the Chemung County Landfill from taking Pennsylvania's drilling waste.

Alexander estimated that a third of the waste going into the Chemung landfill comes from drilling in Pennsylvania. The DEP database shows the landfill accepted 58,000 tons of drill cuttings last year.

Landfill operators have an incentive to accept that waste, said Alexander. Cuttings are four times heavier than normal garbage, and landfills charge by weight.

That incentive also raises questions about how vigilant landfill operators are when it comes to identifying waste they should refuse, he said.

It's a concern shared by residents throughout Pennsylvania. With such a large volume of waste material in the state, Steinzor said there is concern that some of it might be mishandled along the way.

Pedersen said drilling and gas companies in Pennsylvania are required to determine whether their waste is radioactive. They send paperwork to DEP that describes the waste and indicates where it's being sent, he said. Once state regulators give their blessing, the waste can proceed to a landfill.

Wagner said drillers have 90 days to move their waste off-site. All landfills have radiation alarms, she added.

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Can plants take on new roles with tiny carbon materials? | [View Clip](#)
03/23/2014
Daily Times - Online, The

Michael Strano thinks our use of plants has been too limited.

Sure, we've manipulated them to produce more food, sprout prettier flowers and grow faster. But Strano, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Mass., wants to give them totally new functions as sensors, antennae and tiny power plants.

"For millennia, we've used plants for wood, fruit and burning - very low-tech functions," said Strano, a professor of chemical engineering. "It's time to ask whether they can form the basis for very sophisticated technologies."

Along with colleagues, including plant biologist Juan Pablo Giraldo, Strano has modified the function of a small flowering plant, *Arabidopsis thaliana*, to transform it into a living sensor for the nitric oxide that leads to air pollution. The two say they could imagine vast crop fields studded with the occasional plant sensor, which could, if exposed to nitric oxide, light up enough to be detected by a camera and report on air quality.

In a paper published recently in the journal *Nature Materials*, they also showed that they could enhance photosynthesis, the first step toward using plants to make more biofuels. Plants have an incredible ability to make energy from nothing more than sunlight and air - so why not extend that ability to create energy in new materials that can repair themselves like plants and not only don't pollute but actually absorb greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide in the process, Giraldo said.

This may sound far-fetched, but James J. Collins, a biomedical engineer at Boston

University, said he was impressed with the team's ideas and how much they've accomplished so far. No one has previously linked plant biology with synthetic biology, which designs and constructs biological devices for useful purposes, said Collins, a founder of that field.

"I thought it was fascinating," Collins said of the new paper. "This opens up more rapid ways you can modify organisms together."

Strano and his team inserted incredibly tiny particles directly into the chloroplasts - the part of the cell where photosynthesis takes place - to lower the concentration of damaging oxygen radicals. This allowed those chloroplasts to work and produce energy in a dish.

The same tiny particles delivered through the leaves appeared to enable the chloroplasts to capture green light, the kind green plants normally don't absorb. This allowed the modified plant to capture 30% more light energy than normal plants.

In another experiment, the team used nanoparticles that can detect nitric oxide to turn the plant into a pollution sensor.

There's still a long way to go before this field, which Strano calls plant nanobionics, will be ready for the real world. But the promise is real, Strano said.

Plants have no moving parts, they repair themselves, and they need little more than sunlight to begin the production process.

For instance, Strano envisions trees that work as cellphone towers, instead of building cellphone towers that look like trees.

"We haven't thought about merging this inorganic world with the biology of the tree," he said, but "that's completely within the realm of possibility."

In a different lab at MIT, biological engineer Timothy Lu and his colleagues are working to grow materials like electrical switches, solar materials and living glues.

"What biology is really good at is you plant something small and it grows. Essentially what we're doing is designing cells that can grow useful materials for us," Lu said.

In a paper published Sunday also in *Nature Materials*, Lu and his team tinkered with the genes of a strain of harmless bacteria, turning the microbes into an electrical switch.

Don't expect one of these in a nearby hardware store anytime soon, but Lu says the first products made by these bacteria factories could be available in the next few years.

"It's definitely something we can do now in the lab, it's a question of what's the best way to bring that to the world."

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Read the original story: Can plants take on new roles with tiny carbon materials?

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Sports in brief | [View Clip](#)
03/23/2014
Daily Times - Online, The

DNREC to hold public hearings on fishing

DOVER – The Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, Division of Fish & Wildlife will hold back-to-back public hearings for black sea bass and summer flounder on Wednesday, March 26.

The meetings will begin at 6 p.m. Both hearings will take place at the new Dover Public Library, located at 35 Loockerman Plaza in Dover. For more details, visit <http://egov.delaware.gov/pmc/>.

Sunset hike set at Burton Island

REHOBOTH BEACH – Delaware Seashore State Park will host a sunset hike at Burton Island at 4 p.m. Friday, March 21.

This guided hike will take participants through one of the park's most picturesque areas to take in the sights as the sun sets over the Indian River Bay.

The cost of this program is \$4 per person and all ages are welcome. Pre-registration is required.

Call 302-227-6991 or visit destateparks.com.

Learn about ospreys with park program

REHOBOTH BEACH – The public is invited to join a park naturalist to learn all about ospreys, their migration, and how to observe them in Delaware during a March 22 program.

The program will begin at 1 p.m. After an indoor presentation, the group will travel to park locations to observe these birds.

Participants should wear shoes that can get muddy and bring binoculars if available. Cost is \$5 per person, and pre-registration is not required.

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Foreign traffic laws crank up chaos | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

Daily Times - Online, The

This picture taken on March 13, 2014, shows cars driving on the Champs Elysee in Paris. / Pierre Andrieu, AFP/Getty Images

Filed Under

It was an open-ended question, the kind you learn to ask after renting countless cars: Is there anything else I should know about driving here?

"Yes," said the Hertz agent at Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris, after taking a glance at my keys. "You can't drive this car in Paris."

Turns out my visit last week coincided with some of the city's worst smog in years. In an effort to cut back on pollution, only cars with odd-numbered license plates could drive in the City of Light. Mine had an even number.

Fortunately, I wasn't driving to Paris.

But that question - what else do I need to know? - is always a useful one to ask. Additional restrictions may apply, particularly if you're driving overseas. Drivers report being hit with high fines and mysterious tickets and they don't know whether to pay them. There's no easy solution.

Paris is hardly the only city that restricts vehicle traffic. London's \$16.50-per-day Congestion Charge affects vehicles operating from 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. on weekdays. If you forget, you'll pay a \$214.50 fine, reduced to \$107 if paid within 14 days, plus an administrative fee if your car rental company handles the transaction.

That's what happened to Vanessa Morton, a vintner from Dallas, when she drove into the wrong part of London on a recent trip. "Five months later, our rental car agency sent us a letter advising they had charged our credit card for over \$200 in fines, which we discovered they were entitled to do under the terms and conditions of the rental agreement," she recalls.

In São Paulo, your car is assigned a day of rest to cut down on traffic. For example, if your plate ends in 1 or 2, you're not allowed to drive in the city limits on Mondays,

says Suzanne Garber, who works for a New Brunswick, N.J.-based non-profit group. The rules are enforced by cameras, which also catch lead-footed drivers in the act.

"I've learned from personal experience on both fronts," she says.

Before we go any further, a little disclaimer: Most of my columns feature intractable problems and improbable resolutions, thanks to the advocacy work I do on the side. Not this one. I've never been able to talk my way out of a traffic ticket, let alone someone else's.

But if I could, I would forgive all traffic violations against car rental customers in Italy. They are by far the single biggest source of consumer complaints about international car rentals that I receive in my work as a consumer advocate.

For example, Peggy Kroll, an outreach coordinator for a non-profit organization in West Palm Beach, Fla., traveled to northern Italy with three friends in 2012. She was shocked when one of her companions, who had rented the car, received two additional bills almost a full year after they'd returned the vehicle. The violations, for illegally entering a limited traffic area and for driving in a lane for public transport, didn't make sense to her.

"None of us was aware of any signage indicating that we were in contravention to the laws of the town," she says. Still, her friend paid the fine.

Here's where things get a little fuzzy. Because the notices sometimes aren't in English, it's hard to know who's behind the bill - the municipality or the car rental company. It's also difficult to discern what you're paying - a car rental company processing fee, or the actual ticket, or a combination of both. And then there's the issue of what will happen if you refuse to settle up.

"No one knows," says Elizabeth Knight, an American attorney who writes a blog about Rome called RomelyouWantTo.com. "But I would not risk it if the traveler ever plans on returning to Italy, as fines for those with unpaid tickets can be extraordinary. I have heard of vehicles being confiscated due to unpaid tickets. Imagine being left on the side of the road in Tuscany with your screaming children, having had your rented Fiat confiscated."

I can't. There has to be a better way of handling moving violations for international visitors. At a minimum, motorists should know what laws they've broken and soon after their trip, not months or years later. And ideally, we should have a clearer idea of what we're paying and our options, including what will happen if we don't.

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Gas tax not taxing enough | [View Clip](#)

03/24/2014

Citizens' Voice - Online, The

The gas industry and its advocates long have contended that the burgeoning industry's contributions to state government revenue can't fairly be measured by comparing the state's direct taxes on the industry against those of other states.

Gov. Tom Corbett and a host of legislators have argued that the total taxation package in each state is different, making it meaningless that Pennsylvania is the only major gas-drilling state without a severance tax on production.

The state Independent Fiscal Office, however, has found that circumstance to be meaningful indeed. It conducted what it called an "apples to apples" comparison of state tax burdens on the industry in 11 major producing states and found that Pennsylvania came in at 11th.

The IFO was created in 2010 to study economic matters and was modeled on the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office. Its study was requested by state Sen. David Argall, a Schuylkill County Republican.

Pennsylvania imposes a flat per well "impact fee," a term devised by lawmakers so that they and Corbett wouldn't have to call it (shudder!) - a tax. Or, perhaps, it's called a fee because it isn't very taxing.

The report found that a Pennsylvania well that began producing in 2014 will be taxed at an effective maximum tax rate of 1.6 percent. A similar well in West Virginia will be taxed at over 7 percent, and a Texas well at 4.6 percent.

According to the industry, the report is flawed because it didn't consider the relative impact of Pennsylvania's corporate income tax.

But the IFO noted that many of the producers are multi-state and multi-national corporations that adroitly report profits in ways that diminish their income tax liability.

The study also noted that Pennsylvania, due to a court decision prior to the rise of the Marcellus Shale industry, does not include the value of gas reserves in property value calculations for local tax purposes - unlike other states. That alone has saved hundreds of millions of dollars for the industry.

Lawmakers should use the study to drive fair taxation policy.

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Legislature, Corbett settle for bottom | [View Clip](#)

03/24/2014

Scranton Times-Tribune - Online, The

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Open Line | [View Clip](#)

03/24/2014

Sentinel - Online, The

Editor's note: Comments published in the Open Line reflect the views of the caller, and not The Sentinel. Comments are verified when possible, but should be taken as opinion, rather than statements of fact. Comments should be brief and to the point. Longer comments will be shortened. Comments in response to signed letters will not be printed. Callers do not need to identify themselves.

When Vladimir Putin invaded Georgia - and someone please tell Sarah Palin it is not in the U.S.A.- what did Bush and Cheney do about it? How soon we forget.

Of course I support the proposed windmill project, because they are a lot less intrusive than fracking for natural gas.

If you are thinking about shopping for a home, beware of Brown Township.

I guess when there is a clinic in this area they don't have the shots all the time. You better get there when they do or you are going to be paying a fortune.

I would like to know whose job it is to pick up the dead deer along the highway: PennDOT, or the Game Commission?

They get saying on Sports Center that the idiot in the White House is in the top 98th percentile in the NCAA bracket. Boy, I wish he would have put that much effort into his job in the White House.

To record an Open Line comment, call The Sentinel's voice mail system at 248-7041 and select mailbox 160 on your touch-tone phone. Listen for the prompts and please speak slowly. Selected responses will be published.

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LEGISLATIVE TALLY | [View Clip](#)

03/24/2014

Williamsport Sun-Gazette - Online

State House OKs bill on hepatitis

From Staff Reports , Williamsport Sun-Gazette

Locally elected and appointed officials voted on the following matters in the past week:

Federal

Congress was out of session.

State

The House voted 194-0 to pass legislation sponsored by state Rep. Matt Baker, R-Wellsboro, encouraging physicians to offer hepatitis C screening for patients born between 1945 and 1965. Voting yes were state Reps. Garth Everett, R-Muncy; Baker; Michael K. Hanna Sr., D-Lock Haven; and Rick Mirabito, D-Williamsport.

The Senate voted 47-0 to pass an amendment regarding registration of vehicles, further providing for lost, stolen, damaged or illegible registration plate and for special registration plates generally; providing for personal organization registration plates and for Appalachian Trail organization registration plates; in financial responsibility, further providing for required financial responsibility; in rules of the road in general, further providing for maximum speed limits; and, in size, weight and load, further providing for conditions of permits and security for damages. Voting yes were state Sens. Gene Yaw, R-Loyalsock Township, and Joe Scarnati, R-Brockway.

County

Lycoming-Clinton Joinder Board voted 3-0 to approve rate revisions issued by the state for Intellectual Disabilities programs, including companion services; home and community habilitation; transportation services; respite services; family aide; and the monthly administration fee per client. Rate changes balanced out to keep the contract amount the same as last year at \$75,000. Voting yes were Lycoming County Commissioners Tony Mussare and Ernie Larson, and Clinton County Commissioner Pete Smeltz. Lycoming County Commissioner Jeff Wheeland and Clinton County Commissioners Joel Long and Jeff Snyder were absent.

Lycoming County commissioners voted 3-0 to approve an agreement for 2,100 feet of rail line extension at NuWeld Inc., in which the county will give up to \$20,000 of natural gas drilling impact funds, the Joint Rail Authority will pay for engineering costs, and NuWeld is paying \$150,000 for construction costs with company growth goals.

Lycoming County Planning Commission voted 9-0 to re-approve three land development plans, including the LongHorn Steakhouse and Mattress Warehouse plans, as conditions were not met within the old ordinance's 90-day period. Voting yes were George Logue Jr., Howard Fry, Christopher E. Keiser, Cindy Bower, James Dunn, Joseph H. Neyhart, Carl Nolan, William Parsons and Michael Sherman.

Municipal

Muncy Borough Council voted 6-0 to authorize Police Chief Jim Dorman to move forward with bidding on a 2013 Ford Interceptor for the police department. Voting

yes were Ed Feigles, Matilda Noviello, Dana Bertin, Linda Stein, Karen Richards and Elaine McAleer. Councilman Richard Baker was absent.

Woodward Township supervisors voted 3-0 to deny a \$48,200 bid for a township tractor in favor of getting a better deal. Voting yes were Alan Worth, Jack Coleman and Wayne Robinson.

City Council voted 7-0 to approve an ordinance establishing an East Third Street Gateway Revitalization Commission. Voting in favor were President Bill Hall, Bonnie Katz, Liz Miele, Jonathan Williamson, Don Noviello, Randall J. Allison and N. Clifford "Skip" Smith.

School District

The Williamsport Area School Board voted 8-0 to purchase 15 Macbook computers for its Career and Technical Education program, at a cost of \$20,355. The board also voted 8-0 to award a \$10,351 contract to Clarkson Chemical Co. Inc. for carpet cleaning at Jackson Primary School and to re-appoint Fred A. Holland, of Murphy, Butterfield and Holland P.C., as district solicitor, at a retainer of \$20,000 and an hourly rate of \$135 for matters outside the scope of the retainer. Voting yes were David Stone, Lori Baer, Jerene Milliken, Karen Confer, Nicholas Grimes, Jane Penman, Spencer Sweeting and Robin Knauth. Board member Chester Peterman was absent.

Montgomery Area School Board voted 7-0 to approve changes to the schedule and configuration for the 2014-15 school year that eliminate the middle school in favor of dividing the district into an elementary school and a junior/senior high school. The vote also approved changes to school-day hours. Voting yes were Adam Diggan, Jody Budman, Gabriel Blasi, Augustine Spizzirri, Christopher Johnson, Paul Stryker Jr. and D. Todd Baker. Board members Todd Woodling and Gary Yocum Sr. were absent.

Muncy School Board voted 9-0 to add two new computer-aided design electives to the senior high school course selection. Both courses - architecture and solid modeling - will be offered as half-credit independent studies. Voting yes were Carla Auten, Mary Bennardi, Scott Johnson, Rhondel Moyle, Lisa Sleboda, Kimberly Spring-Winters, Robert Titman, Sarah Woodward and Scott McLean.

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State gas fees are too low | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

Bucks County Courier Times - Online

A study released last week by the Independent Fiscal Office — the state's version of

the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office — found that the fee Pennsylvania collects on natural gas extracted from the Marcellus Shale is the lowest among the 11 states examined.

The study only confirms what critics of the Corbett administration have been saying all along: that the so-called impact fee supported by the governor and enacted in 2012 doesn't yield nearly the revenue that a severance tax would. By assessing a flat fee per well instead of charging for the amount of gas extracted, Pennsylvania is said to be losing hundreds of millions of dollars. The IFO study revealed that Pennsylvania charges less than 1 percent of the value of the gas produced in the state's high-production wells. The same rate in West Virginia is up to 12 times higher.

Looking at these numbers, one can only conclude that Pennsylvania is practically giving away a valuable natural resource and cheating its citizens in the process.

What defenders of the impact fee say is lost in the argument is that gas companies operating in Pennsylvania do in fact pay more than impact fees. There are sales taxes and capital stock franchise taxes, for example, plus the highest corporate net income tax — 9.9 percent — in the nation (although not all companies pay it). Industry spokesmen point out that the IFO analysis did not include income taxes, thus skewing the numbers and leaving Pennsylvania last in the collection of gas fees.

The Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center, a nonpartisan think tank, counters that natural gas drillers pay very little in state and local taxes. And it says that of 783 companies to file corporate net income tax returns in 2008, only 15 percent owed any tax. For the same year, 51 percent paid the capital stock and franchise tax and 56 percent the personal income tax. The policy center concludes drilling companies enjoy favorable tax treatment in the commonwealth. We conclude Pennsylvania is giving the industry something of a free ride when compared with other states.

All the other states that impose severance taxes, including those in the IFO study, can't be wrong. They're reaping the rewards of the domestic gas and oil boom, while Pennsylvania fears it will drive the drillers away if a severance gas is enacted. That argument is weak or nonexistent. The gas is here. If the companies want it, they will drill here. They should be paying handsomely for the privilege.

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Oil company endorses NV's proposed fracking rules | [View Clip](#)
03/23/2014
Centre Daily Times - Online

The Associated Press March 23, 2014 Updated 3 hours ago

ELKO, Nev. — A Houston-based oil company has endorsed the state's proposed rules

governing hydraulic fracturing, better known as fracking.

The proposed regulations support proven technologies to safely develop Nevada's oil and gas, said Kevin Vorhaben of Noble Energy Inc., which is exploring for oil in three Elko County locations.

They also would ensure safety to human health and the environment, he said at a public workshop in Elko on Wednesday hosted by the Nevada Division of Minerals.

"These innovative proposed rules support the use of proven horizontal holes and hydraulic fracturing technologies to safely develop Nevada's discovered and undiscovered oil and gas resources," Vorhaben said, calling the regulations "tough" and "thorough."

But some residents viewed the company's endorsement as reason to wonder if the minerals division's proposed regulations are too lax, the Elko Daily Free Press reported (<http://bit.ly/1mlFsyF>).

"It really makes me uncomfortable to hear representatives of an oil company endorsing the regulations that you have and how great they are," said Richard Sturm of Elko County.

He noted BP's spill of millions of gallons of oil into the Gulf of Mexico occurred after a 2010 rig explosion despite regulations.

Shannon Salter, a Las Vegas poet, said the issue is "about doing possible permanent damage to the earth," and wealthy oil companies stand to gain from fracking.

Oil and gas developers employ hydraulic fracturing to boost production. The technique pumps water, fine sand and chemicals into wells to fracture open oil- and gas-bearing rock deposits.

The process has been controversial amid concern that fracking gone wrong could taint groundwater with hydrocarbons or fracking fluids containing toxic substances. The industry uses a variety of specially formulated fluids to facilitate fracking.

Among other provisions, the state's proposed rules call for testing underground aquifers before and during oil extraction. They also require companies to disclose chemicals used and to notify the public about fracking operations.

The Division of Minerals, which also held public workshops on its proposed regulations this week in Las Vegas and Carson City, is accepting online public comment on them through Friday.

Online:

The proposed regulations can be found at <http://www.minerals.state.nv.us>

Information from: Elko Daily Free Press, <http://www.elkodaily.com>

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High-tech power plant is \$5 billion bet on future of coal | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

Centre Daily Times - Online

Tribune Washington Bureau March 17, 2014

DE KALB, Miss. — Looming like a spaceship over pine and sweet-gum forest, the high-tech power plant under construction in rural Kemper County is a \$5 billion wager on an energy future that includes coal.

The Kemper plant is scheduled to open this year as the first in the United States to ramp up technology to remove carbon dioxide emissions on a large scale. If it works as planned, up to 65 percent of the plant's potential carbon dioxide emissions would be removed, significantly more than the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed requirement of about 40 percent.

But if its progress is any indication, building a coal plant that can sharply reduce greenhouse gas pollution is a white-knuckle ride. The project is five months behind schedule and more than \$2 billion over budget. The cost overruns have increased electricity bills in southeast Mississippi and contributed to a downgrade in the credit rating outlook for Southern Co., the plant's parent corporation.

The U.S. Energy Department has spent \$270 million on the project - part of \$3.4 billion allocated to carbon-capture demonstration projects since 2009 - yet it remains unclear, according to some analysts, whether the Kemper plant will work as planned.

The carbon-capture plant and four others on the drawing boards are cited by Obama administration officials as evidence that coal can remain part of the president's "all of the above" energy strategy. But many power companies and environmentalists think the administration's proposed standards for greenhouse gas emissions would all but eliminate new coal plants.

Dalia Patino Echeverri, an assistant professor of energy systems and public policy at Duke University, said the new rules would "put coal at a huge disadvantage," noting that the technology to capture and store carbon dioxide "is still an expensive, uncertain proposition."

Six years into the project, Southern is careful not to tout Kemper as a model that could easily be replicated. "To say there is a one-size-fits-all, that what we do here is

applicable someplace else, would probably not be accurate," said Amoi Geter, a spokeswoman for Mississippi Power, the Southern Co. subsidiary building the plant.

In Kemper County, northeast of Jackson, Southern found an unusual cluster of advantages. The plant stands at the mouth of a mine for lignite coal, a cheap fuel. Kemper will use inexpensive treated wastewater in its power generation process. Most importantly, it will make money from the removed carbon dioxide by piping it to two companies that will use it to force oil from old wells.

Coal-fired power plants are the single largest source of heat-trapping carbon dioxide in the United States. In September, the EPA proposed standards for new power plants that would limit carbon dioxide output 1,100 pounds per megawatt hour, down from the current industry average of about 1,800 pounds, a reduction that would require new technology such as that being attempted at Kemper.

Those rules could accelerate the already dramatic shift to natural gas. The price of gas has fallen sharply as hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, has increased supplies, and plants can be built quickly and cheaply.

But natural gas prices have been wildly volatile in the past, and coal prices have historically been low and relatively stable.

"If you think that it's a sound bet that coal will be part of the future of the country, if you have an interest in coal, and companies like Southern do, it makes good business sense to develop technology that lets you use the resource in way that is socially acceptable," said Edward S. Rubin, a professor of engineering and public policy at Carnegie Mellon University.

The 582-megawatt Kemper project will generate enough electricity to serve 189,000 customers. A smaller plant is under construction in Saskatchewan, Canada. About 24 plants around the world are in the planning phase, according to the Carbon Capture and Sequestration Technologies Program at MIT.

Carbon-capture technology is not new. Refineries and some U.S. power plants have used it on a small scale. Gasified coal, the fuel Kemper will burn, is used at other plants too. But Kemper has a new gasification system. Its operating plan significantly scales up and combines all the technology.

The project was wreathed in high hopes. Former Energy Secretary Steven Chu wrote, "This project is of national importance because it provides a viable option for using our abundant coal resources in a cost-effective and clean manner."

The project was budgeted for \$2.4 billion, or about \$1 billion more than a conventional coal plant. But Kemper's cost ballooned to more than \$5 billion because of changes in design, miscalculations about the amount of materials needed and bad weather that slowed work.

Southern wrote down \$1 billion, but Mississippi Power's customers are still carrying some costs. The state Legislature passed a law that allows Southern to recoup costs from ratepayers before the plant produces power and another that lets Mississippi Power issue \$1 billion in bonds. Kemper now accounts for about 16 percent of an average monthly residential electric bill.

The fate of the other four planned U.S. carbon-capture plants remains unclear, said Howard J. Herzog, a senior research engineer with the MIT Energy Initiative. The Energy Department is financing between 10 percent and 50 percent of their costs, but construction would have to begin by mid-2015, when the funding runs out.

"There's a realistic chance that one or all may never get built," Herzog said.

Some experts, like Echeverri, believe the price of carbon-capture technology will come down. But the risks of being a trailblazer mean "no one wants to be among the first 10 plants," she said. "If your choice is that you can start a plant with proven technology like a natural gas plant or unproven expensive technology, you will build a gas plant."

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**No sweet corn for the Fourth of July? Long winter, wet fields threaten crop |
[View Clip](#)
03/23/2014
*Lancaster Online***

An Amish farmer does some early field work in this photo from 2012.

Sweet corn might be ripe in time for Fourth of July celebrations despite the long, hard winter that doesn't want to end.

But it might not be a bad idea to start thinking about an alternate side dish, just in case.

"If this goes on much longer, it's going to be a little challenging to have that July 4th sweet corn ready," says Tim Elkner, an agriculture educator with Penn State Extension.

"It's too early to say for sure — so don't tell people to panic just yet."

The hitch, he explains, is soil preparation — a yearly task that doesn't go well when the ground is snow-covered, frozen or soaked with rain and snow melt.

The "English" farmers with tractors and other modern conveniences should do OK

once spring weather arrives for good, Elkner says — the technology will allow gas-powered farmers to catch up on

“But the Amish will be behind in soil preparation,” he says. “It’s hard to break the soil in these conditions ... when you’re using horses.”

It’s still too early for planting, Elkner says, but “it might be difficult to get fields ready in time” for some crops.

The problem, he says, is that by mid- to late March, a great deal of soil work “should have been completed already.”

“I was talking to a grower this morning,” Elkner said Friday. “It’s still too wet for him to be working in the soil.”

And that’s before the additional snow — up to 2 inches, which is expected to fall in the Lancaster area on Tuesday.

“That’s not an optimistic forecast,” Elkner says. “Any cold and wet conditions will slow down soil drying. ... Ideally, I’d like to see sun across the board in the forecast.”

The lingering winter may impact the Plain community hard, he adds.

“This affects anybody who would be working the soil,” Elkner says. “That being said, you can cover a whole lot more ground with a tractor than you can with a pair of horses.

“Granted, the ‘English’ have larger farms, but we also have the kind of equipment you can run 24 hours a day, with lights. I haven’t seen anybody put lights on a horse just yet.”

The recent spate of cool, cloudy and drizzly days hasn’t helped, Elkner says.

Friday, for instance, was warm. “But it’s cloudy,” he says. “It’s not drying out the soil.”

If the soil remains wet much longer — let’s not forget about that snow forecast for Tuesday — farmers won’t be able to get the onion crop planted in early April.

Late planting doesn’t just mean a late harvest, Elkner says. “The later you get, you lose yield.”

Similarly, he says, late planting means a late harvest for the early-season tomato crop, which means prices will remain higher a little longer at local farm markets.

“That being said, there’s still some flex,” he adds. “There’s a window. I wouldn’t say

we're at the point just yet where we're impacting crops, although it's becoming a little more critical for the Plain folk.

“But you can't say yet that, ‘Oh my gosh, we've lost 10 percent of our yield.’ It's still a little too early to say.”

Even so, Elkner says, “the sweet corn crop ... is running into problems. And we're getting close. By the beginning of April, you'll start to see beads of sweat forming on the foreheads of growers.”

Tom Knapp is a general assignment reporter whose coverage includes Lancaster County heritage, entertainment, libraries and animals. He can be reached at tknapp@lnpnews.com or (717) 481-6107. You can also follow @TKnapp66 on Twitter.

More about Weather

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Anti-fracking activist banned from Pennsylvania land heads to court | [View Clip](#)
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Morning Call - Online

HARRISBURG, Pennsylvania (Reuters) - An anti-fracking activist is set to ask a Pennsylvania judge on Monday to lift an injunction that bars her from her local hospital, grocery and other properties that sit atop vast lands leased by a Texas-based company for shale gas extraction.

A five-month-old injunction prohibits Vera Scroggins, 63, of Brackney, Pennsylvania, from setting foot onto 40 percent of Susquehanna County that is leased by Cabot Oil and Gas .

At Monday's hearing in Susquehanna County Court of Common Pleas in Montrose, Pennsylvania, Scroggins and her lawyers from the Pennsylvania ACLU and Public Citizen in Washington, D.C. , will argue that the injunction was legally flawed, unconstitutional, and set a dangerous precedent by making much of the region where she lives off limits.

Judge Kenneth Seamans, who issued the injunction in October at the request of Cabot, will rule on the request.

"In the company's view, the right to extract gas also includes the right to control the movements of an individual protesting the company's activities," Scroggins said in court documents. "In short, the right to extract gas is, according to the company, also the right to banish."

Scroggins is known for recording anti-fracking video footage, some of which was used in "Gasland," an Oscar-nominated documentary by Josh Fox.

Fracking is the controversial process of injecting water, chemicals, and sand into the underground shale formation to extract oil and gas. It has brought about a gas boom in recent years in northeastern Pennsylvania, but also concerns about its impact on the environment.

According to Cabot, Scroggins engaged in at least 11 incidents of trespassing to make her anti-fracking videos or lead tours, one of which included the participation of celebrities Susan Sarandon, Yoko Ono, and Sean Lennon.

Cabot spokesman George Stark said the company is open to a modification of the injunction limiting it to actual gas facilities and the roads leading to them.

"Cabot's primary concern is with operational sites where safety issues are concerned," he said, adding that Cabot supports freedom of expression.

(Editing by Barbara Goldberg)

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W&J's energy program director sees popular series powering more initiatives |

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03/23/2014

Observer-Reporter - Online

W&J's energy program director sees popular lecture series powering future initiatives

Business reporter

Published Mar 23, 2014 at 10:31 pm (Updated Mar 23, 2014 at 10:31 pm)

Diana Stares, director of the Center for Energy Policy and Management at Washington & Jefferson College, shows W&J's Energy Index graph that charts the United States' energy independence. Stares organized the Energy Lecture Series that promotes talks on energy subjects. The last lecture of the school year in the series "A Vision for Coal" is free and open to the public at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday.

Energy, Diana Stares acknowledged, is a "very divisive" subject. Fossil fuels, renewables, drilling and fracking seem to have as many fervent supporters as fervent detractors.

As director of the Center for Energy Policy and Management at Washington & Jefferson College, Stares strives to provide a comprehensive spectrum through the center's Energy Lecture Series. She seeks speakers on all energy forms, who will detail the goods and evils of their specialty — an information feast for students, faculty and the general public.

"I think people anticipate a more balanced view from W&J about what's going on in energy," Stares said.

They're getting that from a program that not only is gaining momentum, but likely could be a power source for the center's bigger plans.

The lecture series, in its second year, is engaging and energizing audiences in increasing numbers. Last month's session, on water, drew a standing-room crowd to Yost Auditorium, and "A Vision for Coal" — the fifth and final lecture of the school year — may do the same at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday.

These mostly monthly lectures are free and open to the public, and are popular among all demographics — especially W&J undergrads. Lectures are followed by lively question-and-answer exchanges, then spirited one-on-ones between audience members and speakers. Some have been that engrossed.

"Our goal is to have a mixed audience with students, professors and the public," Stares said. "Professors have been very supportive of the series. They encourage students to go."

There have been five lectures each year, and Stares doubts there will be more. "We will do at least four," she said. "Five makes it a little difficult to get students because there's so much competition for their time."

EQT Corp. sponsors the lecture series through a grant from the EQT Foundation. The funding, however, doesn't guarantee an appearance from an energy figure the school approaches.

"Some speakers will come only with a large speaker's fee that I don't have the ability to pay," Stares said.

One student – Frank Galizia, now a senior – invited Gov. Tom Corbett last year, but he could not make it.

Lectures are but a part of the energy center equation.

"One of the center's goals is to support a core energy program here," said Stares, who was hired in October 2011 to supervise the center's launch. That occurred the following April with its Energy Summit, featuring keynote speaker Susan Eisenhower, an energy expert and granddaughter of former President Dwight Eisenhower.

There are no energy majors or minors at W&J, and there is no graduate school. Stares, however, said that "certificate programs and master's programs are under consideration in other subject areas" there. She added that programs in energy – "probably energy management" – are possible.

"We're moving in that direction. The first step was opening the center."

W&J's Energy Index is another key initiative. "We're going to promote it in the coming year," Stares said.

Two professors created the index, which, according to www.washjeff.edu/cepm/energy-index, provides a "barometer for measuring the progress of the United States toward energy independence and energy security."

The first graphic on the link breaks down, by presidential administration, the percentage of energy used nationally that is provided by domestic sources. It begins with Harry Truman in 1949, whose administration has the highest percentage, 95.2 – a full 22 percentage points above Barack Obama (73.2).

The figure declined under nine of Harry Truman's 11 successors. There was a significant rise under Ronald Reagan (83.6, up from 77.9 under Jimmy Carter), and the Obama percentage is ahead of George W. Bush's 70.1.

"We're trying to secure a grant to do work on the index. We have to find a way to get additional funds," said Stares, of Mt. Lebanon.

Transitional glitches accompany every career switch, but her move to W&J was fairly

smooth. Being a virtual lifelong Pittsburger was a major factor.

Stares, 58, lived initially in Herminie, a hard-scrabble mining patch in Westmoreland County, before moving to Wilksburg, where she graduated from high school. She lived next to coal and was surrounded by steel in its heyday, when orange skies, fouled water and toxic soil were commonplace.

After four years at Hofstra University on Long Island, she returned home for law school at Duquesne University – and ultimately stayed home. Stares became an environmental attorney in the Pittsburgh office of the state Department of Environmental Protection, where she practiced for 30 years before arriving at W&J.

Energy, environment and industry have been among her calling cards for decades. And will continue to be.

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High-tech power plant is \$5 billion bet on future of coal | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette - Online

DE KALB, Miss. — Looming like a spaceship over pine and sweet-gum forest, the high-tech power plant under construction in rural Kemper County is a \$5 billion wager on an energy future that includes coal.

The Kemper plant is scheduled to open this year as the first in the United States to ramp up technology to remove carbon dioxide emissions on a large scale. If it works as planned, up to 65 percent of the plant's potential carbon dioxide emissions would be removed, significantly more than the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed requirement of about 40 percent.

But if its progress is any indication, building a coal plant that can sharply reduce greenhouse gas pollution is a white-knuckle ride. The project is five months behind schedule and more than \$2 billion over budget. The cost overruns have increased electricity bills in southeast Mississippi and contributed to a downgrade in the credit rating outlook for Southern Co., the plant's parent corporation.

The U.S. Energy Department has spent \$270 million on the project — part of \$3.4 billion allocated to carbon-capture demonstration projects since 2009 — yet it remains unclear, according to some analysts, whether the Kemper plant will work as planned.

The carbon-capture plant and four others on the drawing boards are cited by Obama administration officials as evidence that coal can remain part of the president's “all of the above” energy strategy. But many power companies and environmentalists think

the administration's proposed standards for greenhouse gas emissions would all but eliminate new coal plants.

Dalia Patino Echeverri, an assistant professor of energy systems and public policy at Duke University, said the new rules would “put coal at a huge disadvantage,” noting that the technology to capture and store carbon dioxide “is still an expensive, uncertain proposition.”

Six years into the project, Southern is careful not to tout Kemper as a model that could easily be replicated. “To say there is a one-size-fits-all, that what we do here is applicable someplace else, would probably not be accurate,” said Amoi Geter, a spokeswoman for Mississippi Power, the Southern Co. subsidiary building the plant.

In Kemper County, northeast of Jackson, Southern found an unusual cluster of advantages. The plant stands at the mouth of a mine for lignite coal, a cheap fuel. Kemper will use inexpensive treated wastewater in its power generation process. Most importantly, it will make money from the removed carbon dioxide by piping it to two companies that will use it to force oil from old wells.

Coal-fired power plants are the single largest source of heat-trapping carbon dioxide in the United States. In September, the EPA proposed standards for new power plants that would limit carbon dioxide output 1,100 pounds per megawatt hour, down from the current industry average of about 1,800 pounds, a reduction that would require new technology such as that being attempted at Kemper.

Those rules could accelerate the already dramatic shift to natural gas. The price of gas has fallen sharply as hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, has increased supplies, and plants can be built quickly and cheaply.

But natural gas prices have been wildly volatile in the past, and coal prices have historically been low and relatively stable.

“If you think that it's a sound bet that coal will be part of the future of the country, if you have an interest in coal, and companies like Southern do, it makes good business sense to develop technology that lets you use the resource in way that is socially acceptable,” said Edward S. Rubin, a professor of engineering and public policy at Carnegie Mellon University.

The 582-megawatt Kemper project will generate enough electricity to serve 189,000 customers. A smaller plant is under construction in Saskatchewan, Canada. About 24 plants around the world are in the planning phase, according to the Carbon Capture and Sequestration Technologies Program at MIT.

Carbon-capture technology is not new. Refineries and some U.S. power plants have used it on a small scale. Gasified coal, the fuel Kemper will burn, is used at other plants too. But Kemper has a new gasification system. Its operating plan significantly

scales up and combines all the technology.

The project was wreathed in high hopes. Former Energy Secretary Steven Chu wrote, “This project is of national importance because it provides a viable option for using our abundant coal resources in a cost-effective and clean manner.”

The project was budgeted for \$2.4 billion, or about \$1 billion more than a conventional coal plant. But Kemper's cost ballooned to more than \$5 billion because of changes in design, miscalculations about the amount of materials needed and bad weather that slowed work.

Southern wrote down \$1 billion, but Mississippi Power's customers are still carrying some costs. The state Legislature passed a law that allows Southern to recoup costs from ratepayers before the plant produces power and another that lets Mississippi Power issue \$1 billion in bonds. Kemper now accounts for about 16 percent of an average monthly residential electric bill.

The fate of the other four planned U.S. carbon-capture plants remains unclear, said Howard J. Herzog, a senior research engineer with the MIT Energy Initiative. The Energy Department is financing between 10 percent and 50 percent of their costs, but construction would have to begin by mid-2015, when the funding runs out.

“There's a realistic chance that one or all may never get built,” Herzog said.

Some experts, like Echeverri, believe the price of carbon-capture technology will come down. But the risks of being a trailblazer mean “no one wants to be among the first 10 plants,” she said. “If your choice is that you can start a plant with proven technology like a natural gas plant or unproven expensive technology, you will build a gas plant.”

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Tax issue sparks political debate | [View Clip](#)

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Pittsburgh Post-Gazette - Online

JOHNSTOWN — Natural gas production is growing in Pennsylvania unlike anywhere else in the United States.

The commonwealth sent 72 percent more natural gas into the market in 2012 than it did in 2011, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

In all, 2.26 trillion cubic feet was extracted during 2012 with a little more than 90 percent coming from shale wells.

Approximately 3.1 trillion cubic feet of gas was pulled last year, according to operator-provided information that is not verified before posted online by the Department of Environmental Protection.

When official nationwide data is compiled for 2013, the state will probably rank second in terms of overall production, behind only Texas.

“I told Gov. (Rick) Perry of Texas – they think in oil and gas they're the big ones; you know, now in gas, we're No. 2 – I told him, ‘Be careful, we're coming for you,’ ” said Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Corbett during a visit to Somerset County earlier this month.

The state's Marcellus Shale play alone is estimated to have trillions of cubic feet of recoverable gas, although precise figures are constantly evolving.

“We're sitting on a Saudi Arabian-type natural gas deposit in Pennsylvania,” said state Rep. Bryan Barbin, D-Johnstown, from the 71st district. “And, if we use it, then the public's going to benefit.”

There has been auxiliary growth, too, in many areas, such as shipping, storage, sales and construction.

“I think we're seeing more and more people understanding the opportunity and they're seeing where they fit and where the state fits as well,” said Johnstown resident Mark Critz, a Democratic Party candidate for lieutenant governor, who, during his time in the U.S. House of Representatives, co-founded the Marcellus Shale Caucus.

Political disagreements, especially about how to generate money from the industry, have arisen.

Pennsylvania is the only state with significant natural gas production that does not impose a market- or volume-based severance tax.

An impact fee, which was adopted in 2012 as part of Act 13, an oil and gas law overhaul, is used instead. It has generated a little more than \$200 million annually with most of the money going to municipalities and counties directly impacted by drilling.

A report issued by the Independent Fiscal Office, a central, nonpartisan state agency, says, "analysis finds that Pennsylvania has the lowest total effective tax rate (includes state severance and certain local taxes) among the comparison states," which were either large natural gas producers or in close proximity to the commonwealth.

The Marcellus Shale Coalition, a trade industry group, immediately issued a rebuttal a few days ago describing the report as "incomplete" and pointing out Pennsylvania has the highest statutory corporate income tax rate, among the 11 comparison states, at 9.99 percent, although, according to the IFO, the "vast majority" of corporate natural gas extraction is done by multistate corporations that could be paying "very different" rates.

"Though IFO readily acknowledges this, it stands to reason that its incomplete analysis lacks an 'apples to apples' comparison of the total tax liability for oil and natural gas producers across states," according to the MSC document.

"Rather, it reflects a narrow snapshot of exclusively energy production taxes." It continued: "Those who oppose shale development will inevitably seek to leverage this flawed analysis as a rallying cry, based purely on politics rather than objective facts and economic realities, for higher energy taxes on businesses and families. Such policies would have a chillingly negative impact on job creation, economic growth and responsible energy production in the commonwealth."

The state's Democratic Party officially supports a severance tax, which Corbett, a Republican, opposes, believing it would hamper the industry's growth. All five Democrats running for governor – Katie McGinty, Rob McCord, Allyson Schwartz, Tom Wolf and Jack Wagner – back some form of a severance tax.

On Wednesday, McCord, the state's treasurer, released a plan, calling for a 10-percent drillers' tax on the net value of natural gas after extraction, which he believes will generate \$1.63 billion in its first year.

"We're sitting on top of one of the largest natural gas formations in the world," said McCord. "And yet for the privilege of allowing drillers to make billions of dollars in profits from our resources, we receive less than any other state in the country. That makes no sense at all. These natural gas resources belong to the people of Pennsylvania and the people deserve to be fairly and justly compensated for allowing drillers to profit from their resources. That's why I'm proposing this sensible plan. It does more than any other to make this a fair deal."

McGinty's plan would use money from a severance tax to fund education.

"I believe that we should enact a severance tax just like every state does," said McGinty. "Under my plan, we would implement a severance tax that is competitive with neighboring states so that we can keep the jobs here while generating more than

\$600 million to restore Tom Corbett's cuts to education.”

An environmental debate is taking place, too.

Marcellus Shale natural gas is extricated by a process called hydraulic fracturing in which chemically treated water is used to crack the rock.

“The environmental concerns are something that we need to pay a lot of attention to. ... (But) water contamination is really not a critical issue with the hydraulic fracturing,” said Elizabeth Stelle, a senior policy analyst with the Commonwealth Foundation, a free-market public policy organization that touts the benefits of Marcellus Shale drilling at the website EnergyFactsPA.com.

Other organizations have opposed fracking, fearing it can harm water supplies and residents near drilling sites.

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Drilling, Fracking Efficiency Fuels Oil and Gas Boom | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette - Online

Technological advances in drilling efficiency are one of the reasons shale oil and natural gas production continues to skyrocket in six of America's biggest oil and natural gas fields, according to a new U.S. Energy Information Administration report.

Production of crude oil and natural gas through the use of hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, is considered to have a significant effect on climate change because of methane leaks in the natural gas distribution system that haven't been quantified yet. And, burning crude oil is a direct emitter of greenhouse gases contributing to human-caused climate change.

The EIA reports that more oil and gas is being produced more efficiently now than even a year ago in natural gas fields in the Marcellus shale of Pennsylvania and the Haynesville shale of Texas and Louisiana. That's also true in the crude oil fields of the Eagle Ford and Permian basins of Texas, the Niobrara shale of Colorado and Wyoming and the Bakken shale of North Dakota and Montana.

In Nov. 2012, about 300 barrels of crude oil per day were being produced for each active drilling rig in the Bakken shale of western North Dakota. Today, crude oil production per rig has increased to 500 barrels per day. In Pennsylvania's Marcellus shale, roughly 5 million cubic feet of natural gas were being produced per rig per day, a figure that has jumped to about 6.5 million cubic feet today.

In each of the six major oil and gas fields across the country, overall production has increased dramatically over just a year ago. Crude oil production in the Eagle Ford shale, for example, has increased to more than 1.3 million barrels per day today, up from about 800,000 barrels of oil per day at the beginning of 2013. Natural gas production has seen increases nearly everywhere except in east Texas and Louisiana, where production has begun to decline, EIA data show.

RELATED Fracking Boom Leading to Fracking Bust Scientists: Lack of Data Means Fracking Impacts Unknown Natural Gas May Benefit Climate Despite Methane Leaks

By next month, each Eagle Ford drilling rig is expected to contribute over 400 barrels of oil per day more than it would have drilling in the same area seven years ago. In the Marcellus, natural gas wells drilled today can be expected to produce more than 6 million cubic feet of gas per day than a newly drilled well would have in 2007, according to the EIA.

More precise drilling technology means that energy companies can drill more wells per rig and drill into higher-yielding pockets of oil and gas, EIA industrial economist Mike Ford said.

"I would say that the utilization of mobile drilling pads has played a major role in increasing the number of wells that can be drilled per rig," he said.

Mobile drilling pads have long been used in shale oil and natural gas fields. For example, when natural gas drilling was booming in western Colorado's Piceance Basin more than seven years ago, a movable drilling platform could drill perhaps dozens of wells right next to each other on the same drilling site. The wells themselves would angle in different directions deep underground from the land surface using a technique called "directional" drilling.

"Essentially, mobile drilling pads allow operators to move rigs between different well sites in the same location so that groups of wells can be drilled without having to disassemble a drilling platform," Ford said. "This reduces the amount of time that it

takes to drill individual wells.”

Energy companies have been focusing on drilling “sweet spot” areas in oil and gas fields — areas where a greater concentration of oil and gas can be found and extracted, he said.

Drilling techniques have been refined to maximize the oil and gas bearing area that each well can access, and drillers are likely to have used fracking to increase the amount of oil and gas they can extract and bring to market, Ford said.

As the EIA expects natural gas production in the U.S. to increase 56 percent through 2040, what greater oil and gas drilling efficiency means for the climate is an open question, however.

Scientists have long complained that there are too little data available to accurately assess energy production's impact on groundwater, air quality and the climate, and access to oil and gas drilling and production sites is often too restricted for scientists to adequately study them, a group of scientists said during a presentation at the American Geophysical Union Fall Meeting in San Francisco last December.

A Stanford University-led study released in February showed that methane leaks are common in natural gas production and distribution. However, those leaks may not fully negate the climate benefits of using natural gas to produce electricity.

Methane is a greenhouse gas about 100 times as potent as carbon dioxide soon after being released into the atmosphere, and about 34 times as potent as CO₂ after about 100 years in the atmosphere.

Fracking alone could emit up to 1 teragram of methane per year in the U.S. — only a fraction of possible overall natural gas methane emissions, the study's co-author Francis O'Sullivan said when it was published last month.

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Prudent drilling: The county has a good deal at Deer Lakes Park | [View Clip](#)
03/23/2014
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette - Online

Taking advantage of the potential for jobs and energy while protecting the region's air and water supplies is the key to successfully tapping Marcellus Shale deposits deep underground.

It looks like Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald has achieved the right balance with a five-year agreement with Range Resources and Huntley & Huntley for hydraulic drilling under Deer Lakes Park in West Deer and Frazer.

Naturally, the deal brings financial benefits. If approved by Allegheny County Council, it will mean a \$4.7 million bonus payment, \$3 million for improvements to the county park system and annual royalty payments estimated at \$3 million a year for as long as the wells produce. There also is potential for employment opportunities, with Range committed to holding at least two job fairs for county residents.

It is safety features, though, that set this deal apart, since the provisions in this agreement go beyond state-mandated safeguards. Most important, the lease forbids surface drilling within the park; horizontal wells will run underground from three pads erected on private property outside the park.

The county will require surface water to be tested 1,000 feet beyond the 2,500-foot distance from a well site that is required by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. Surface waters will be tested every three months until drilling begins and then again every six months until drilling is complete to assess any impact from the drilling.

Range Resources will coordinate with the Wagman Observatory in Deer Lakes to prevent light from interfering with its astronomy operations, and the company will limit truck traffic on school bus routes. Further, the lease mandates that the firms work with local property owners on noise and light pollution and enter into agreements to maintain local roads. When the drilling is done, Range must pay to repave county roads that have been used.

There has been vocal opposition to allowing drilling under the park, and general citizen vigilance is a good thing. Although this lease agreement won't satisfy everyone, it is carefully crafted and worthy of approval by county council.

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Palmy Days for Jerry Brown | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette - Online

SACRAMENTO, Calif. -- I ask Jerry if he's ready for Hillary.

Back in 1992, when he ran for president against Bill Clinton, Jerry Brown was remorseless in taking on "Slick Willie," as he called him, and his wife, pelting them with accusations of corruption and conflicts-of-interest in Arkansas. In one seething exchange on the debate stage, Mr. Clinton snapped: "You ought to be ashamed of

yourself for jumping on my wife. You're not worth being on the same platform as my wife."

In the governor's office over coffee, I ask a more mellow Jerry Brown how he would feel about a Hillary coronation. "The polls say that she's in an extremely strong position," he says. "So prominent in her husband's administration, then a senator, then secretary of state. Those are powerful milestones. I don't see anyone challenging her at this point."

So how does he reconcile what he said in 1992 and now? Have the Clintons changed, or has Mr. Brown changed?

He crosses his arms and gives me a flinty look, finally observing: "In retrospect, after we see all the other presidents that came afterwards, certainly, Clinton handled his job with a level of skill that hasn't been met since."

Take that, President Obama.

And could he see his old nemesis Bill, who endorsed Gavin Newsom for governor instead of Mr. Brown in 2009, as First Lad? "Wherever he is, he will fill up the room, that's for sure," he replies. "He has a lot of political energy."

It's an astonishing thing, but the prickly Jerry Brown has, at long last, become something of a diplomat. He's 75, balding and gray. But he's still slender and fit, and remains an eclectic party of one.

Two weeks ago Mr. Brown ended up on the opposite side of two key planks in the California Democrats' platform — banning fracking and legalizing pot.

Like Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper and California Sen. Dianne Feinstein, Mr. Brown is wary about legalized pot and wants to chart the evolution of the revolution. As he said on "Meet the Press," "How many people can get stoned and still have a great state or a great nation?"

I ask the man formerly known as Governor Moonbeam if he ever smoked pot.

"We're dealing with the seventh-largest economy in the world, and I'm not going to deal with these marginal issues," he said primly. Actually, it's the eighth, but maybe he is anticipating a move up.

His lieutenant, Gavin Newsom, told Ronan Farrow on MSNBC that Mr. Brown was wrong on the pot issue and should not use words like "potheads," "stoners" and "hippies." But Mr. Brown says that his remarks to David Gregory were "more of a wry comment" than "a policy pronouncement."

I asked the governor if he had read Linda Ronstadt's memoir, in which she praised her

former beau as “smart and funny, not interested in drinking or drugs.” She made note of his famous frugality, recalling that once, when they were going to dinner at Rosemary Clooney's, Jerry wanted to take a box of roses that had been sent to Ms. Ronstadt, remove the card and give it to Clooney.

At first Mr. Brown clams up, but then he relents. “I visit her at Christmastime” sometimes, he said. “She's thoughtful and has a lot to say.”

As he raises a ton of money to run for an unprecedented fourth term, which he first announced in a casual tweet, the famous rebel seems strangely content.

He's never seen “Chinatown,” but he's trying to deal with the drought by fixing the state's unsustainable water transport system, which his dad helped put in place and he himself tried to fix 30 years ago. And he's still fighting for his dream of a high-speed train from Sacramento to San Diego, a project bogged down in lawsuits. He takes a white model of the train from the window and lovingly places it in the middle of a big picnic table, noting that he has liked trains since he was a kid.

He said he wasn't upset when Mr. Newsom joined the opposition last month. “I don't think he has repeated the comment, do you?” he asked an aide.

His office is full of black-and-white pictures of his father, the former governor of California — two with a stunningly young-looking JFK just before he became president. The onetime Jesuit seminarian is low-key about his role in bringing California back from \$27 billion in the red three years ago to a budget surplus of several billion.

“I had a good hand,” he murmurs, “and I played it reasonably well.” He says he thinks his dad would have “enjoyed” seeing his son's success, achieved partly by belatedly adopting some of Pat Brown's more social ways with lawmakers.

I ask Mr. Brown what he thinks about the young Silicon Valley entrepreneurs who have complained that the homeless are ruining the aesthetic of San Francisco.

“There's not a lot of people who like homeless on the street,” he said. “I wouldn't tie that to Silicon Valley.”

We're meeting the same day that Rand Paul is making a speech at Berkeley warning about the National Security Agency's “assault” on privacy, and Mr. Brown says he also worries about that.

“There's a tendency to totalism, total information, and once you have total information you're making it easier for total control,” he said.

He also finds Tea Party obstructionism “extremely ominous and dangerous.”

Asked what he has done for fun lately, the looser Gov. Brown replies that he helped his wife and adviser, Anne Gust Brown, pick out some clothes, noting: "I like elegance, more classic, not too flamboyant with colors."

Maureen Dowd is a syndicated columnist for The New York Times.

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Chambersburg council to discuss stormwater utility department | [View Clip](#) **03/23/2014**

Public Opinion - Online

CHAMBERSBURG Chambersburg Borough Council is scheduled to discuss the possible formation of a new stormwater utility department for 2015 during Monday night's meeting.

At a Franklin County Council of Government's meeting March 19, Borough Manager Jeffrey Stonehill spoke to local municipalities about this new development.

The borough is creating the new department as early as this summer, but within two years, in response to a mandate from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, according to Stonehill.

The EPA is enforcing the federal Clean Water Act of 1972 across the nation with major cities encountering the rules in 1990 and smaller towns in 1999.

The department would inspect parking lots and detention basins that collect runoff and test the quality of the stormwater discharge into the Falling Spring and Conococheague Creek.

The Chambersburg stormwater system has 52 miles of pipe, 14 miles of open channels, 1,983 catch basins and 55 detention ponds and eventually flows into the Potomac River and to the Chesapeake Bay.

Also on the agenda:

- Reviewing and discussing proposed amendments to the Borough Stormwater Management Ordinance

- Referral to the Parking, Traffic, Street Light Committee from the owners of "Mane Design Hair Salon" requesting a change to the parking limit on South Third Street.

- Conduct a public hearing to Borough Code, Chapter 254 as it relates to bonding required to make an opening or excavation in any street of the borough

The meeting will be held at 7 p.m. at Borough Hall at 100 S. Second St.

Lauren Cappuccio can be contacted at 262-4754.

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Democratic candidates eye taxes to ease wealth gap in Pa. | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

Reading Eagle - Online

HARRISBURG - Under the banner of fairness and equality, the Democratic candidates for governor are proposing a grab bag of changes in Pennsylvania tax laws that would tap wealthy taxpayers and businesses to ease the economic pain of the middle class and the poor.

In many cases, their arguments echo the national Democratic Party's rhetoric over the growing gap between the rich and the poor.

The five Democrats are unanimous in their calls for a significant tax on the state's burgeoning natural gas industry after what they say has been nearly four years of grossly inadequate taxation under Republican Gov. Tom Corbett's administration.

Some candidates are eyeing the personal income tax as a potential vehicle for redistributing the burden of the roughly \$12 billion-a-year tax - the biggest single source of state revenue - and some advocate increasing other taxes and closing business tax loopholes.

One of the most provocative ideas would overhaul the 43-year-old personal income tax to exclude more lower-income households from taxation, reduce taxes for the middle class and increase taxes on the highest earners.

Tom Wolf's plan would exclude from taxation every taxpayer's income below a certain amount - he calls it a "universal exemption" - and apply a still-to-be-determined flat tax rate to any portion of income above that.

"It asks more from people who make more," said Wolf, a wealthy businessman from York who has plowed \$10 million of his money into the primary race and whose heavy TV advertising has helped cement his status as front-runner.

If the universal exemption were set at \$30,000 and the tax rate at 4 percent, an individual with \$50,000 in income would pay \$800 in taxes compared with \$1,535 under the present system, according to an Associated Press analysis. Someone with \$500,000 in income would owe \$18,800 in taxes compared with \$15,350 under the current system.

Someone with a Pennsylvania taxable income of \$30,000 pays \$921 under the present system but would pay no tax under Wolf's plan.

Although Wolf says his goal is to keep overall revenue from the tax on its current track, the rate would need to be higher than the current 3.07 percent because of the smaller number of households that would be subject to the tax.

Whether the proposal could withstand a legal challenge is unclear. The Pennsylvania Constitution declares that "all taxes shall be uniform" but also lists numerous exemptions and special provisions.

Wolf, a former state revenue secretary, says he believes the universal exemption is permissible so long as a single tax rate is used. Some legal experts disagree.

"You're definitely going to get a challenge to that," said Philadelphia lawyer Robert H. Louis, a former chairman of the tax law section of the Pennsylvania Bar Association.

One of Wolf's Democratic primary rivals, state Treasurer Rob McCord, said he could support making the income-tax system more progressive but only after ruling out other more politically feasible steps to raise money, such as a gas drilling tax and closing tax loopholes.

"Any general increase in a tax burden should be a last resort, not a first conversation," he said.

Pennsylvania is one of eight states that use a flat-rate income-tax system, according to the Denver-based National Conference of State Legislatures. Thirty-three states use graduated systems, which impose progressively higher rates as income rises. Nine states do not have broad-based income taxes, the NCSL says.

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The proposed taxes on natural-gas drilling - long a priority of the Legislature's Democratic minority - dwarf the other tax proposals in terms of new revenue for education, environmental protection and other state programs.

McCord's proposal would be the most lucrative - a 10 percent levy on the net value of the gas after deducting certain production expenses. He says it would generate \$1.6 billion in the first year and \$3.25 billion by 2020.

McGinty said her proposal would generate at least \$600 million a year and vowed that the money would be used exclusively to improve K-12 education. The two-tiered plan calls for a 4.5 percent tax on the wellhead price of gas plus a production tax of 2 cents per 1,000 cubic feet.

Wolf and U.S. Rep. Allyson Schwartz both propose a 5 percent gas extraction tax to raise money for education, infrastructure improvements and environmental initiatives.

Jack Wagner, a former state auditor general, said he favors a tax equal to the average of the taxes imposed in other gas-producing states. He said the revenue should be used for purposes that include environmental protection.

Pennsylvania's taxes on gas drilling are among the nation's lowest, according to a recent state legislative report issued this week. The state does not tax gas production but rather imposes an impact fee for each well drilled that is expected to generate less than \$250 million this year.

Several of the candidates have called for taxing cigars and smokeless tobacco. Most of them also advocate closing the "Delaware loophole" that they say allows 70 percent of the companies that do business in Pennsylvania to avoid paying the state's corporate net income tax.

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Ban variable power rates | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

Republican & Herald - Online

Electricity rate price-gouging of thousands of Pennsylvanians during the unusually cold winter has produced a surge of consumer-protection bills in the state Legislature. Most, however, do not embrace the simplest and surest course to protect consumers from predatory pricing.

Lawmakers deregulated the electricity market more than a decade ago. Since then, the abundance of natural gas resulting from the Marcellus Shale drilling boom has driven down prices.

But many consumers received nasty shocks when they opened their power bills midwinter - exponential increases ranging to 300 percent over the teaser rates that they had agreed to months earlier, when leaves were on the trees.

The industry blamed the massive increase on volatile spot-market prices resulting from long cold spells.

Lawmakers since have proposed rate caps, specific notification of impending rate

spikes and some other measures meant to take the surprise out of variable-rate escalation.

The better course would be to prohibit variable-rate pricing.

Some legislators say that variable rates work for some customers, especially business customers, even though many businesses were badly burned by the recent rate spikes.

Many businesses have the wherewithal to negotiate prices and, at the least, to fully understand the contracts they enter for their power supplies. Most residential customers lack bargaining power and legal expertise.

Legislators should ban variable contracts for residential contracts, maintain default rates for consumers who do not want to switch and shorten the periods for which consumers must maintain their contracts with suppliers.

The recent price-gouging requires major reform rather than tinkering.

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Swimming-hole column makes a splash | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

Standard-Speaker - Online

I learned long ago to expect feedback when I write about iconic Hazleton-area people, places or things. In my last article, I featured a few local swimming holes, but I clearly didn't mention them all. Cue letters from readers.

Hazleton resident Delores Cassarella writes, "Enjoyed your latest column. You certainly were daring in your youth. My friends would take me to a place called the Powder Hole. The water was crystal clear. I haven't been there in years but it certainly was a scenic place."

Now off-limits to bathers, in my day it was headquarters for daring youths unafraid of heights. Many boys used to leap from the massive iron trestle that ran some 40 feet above the boiling cauldron below where tons of hard water fell every second.

Area resident Diane (Bertoldi) Ontko got in touch. "I really enjoyed your article about your summer adventures in and around various swimming holes in our area. I was born in Fern Glen and had similar experiences. Some of my happiest memories involve swimming at a mud hole we called Paddy Brown's."

Diane recalls the fun like it happened last Thursday. Here's a part of her tale.

"In the small coal-mining town in Northeastern Pennsylvania where I grew up during

the 1940s and '50s, there were no municipal swimming pools or even private ones for that matter. The most that could be hoped for was a tin tub filled with water from a hose. Although a fair-sized creek ran through our one-road town, it was badly polluted by sulphur from coal mine water runoff, fecal matter, and garbage (there being no garbage pickup service or public sewers at the time).

"As kids, we didn't really know or understand about 'pollution,' but we did know that nothing lived in the water, and, although it was mighty tempting, we never swam in it. It was almost as though 'no swimming in the creek' was born into us genetically. Paddy Brown's was our only alternative.

"Although it was only about 50 feet by 50 feet, to us kids it was huge. It didn't matter that the water smelled like rotten watermelon during the long dry spells when the feeder stream dried up. And it didn't matter that getting to Paddy's usually meant a long, sweaty, two-mile hike on brutally hot days. We talked, joked, and sang as we walked and often stopped to pick and eat the blackberries, blueberries and raspberries that grew along the railroad tracks leading to the mountain. This prolonged our trip, but hey, we had all day, and the days then were so much longer."

Diane and her husband enjoyed that place as kids. Me? I never saw that swimming hole, but I bet I was close by. I recall walking on those tracks to a trestle with my cousin Frieda Kaylor Zajac, and that pool had to be within a mile or so of where we walked.

Diane does a fine job describing Black Creek, a shadowy waterway that my grandfather used to fish when he was a boy around 1900. You could see how trout would have loved to lay in some of the deep, dark holes in that water. But as she says, by the 1940s, the putrid smell and the sight of human effluence told even the youngest of us "cousins" not to slip and fall in.

Thom Mascavich wades in with his insights. "Once again you brought back some great memories. I remember fondly the rope on the Nescopeck. You were much braver than me, first to go into it in May, and secondly to dive into it. The things we did as kids.

"As we aged I also remember the Powder Hole and several places. I don't know how we found them. Thanks for helping me recall my youth. I'm also remembering all the great pools we had in the area. Growing up in the '50s and '60s certainly was great.

"FYI, if on Facebook, we have a great group called 'You might be from Hazleton if.' Lots of us old-timers. Hope all is well."

It was a pleasant surprise to hear from old Hazleton classmate Bob Shema. Along with Heights resident Al Turic, Shema was one of Kutztown State University's most innovative art students.

"My sister Lorraine Ross in Hazleton directed me to your columns a few months ago, and I've been reading online ever since. Great stuff man! It's awesome to reminisce about old times growing up in good old Hazleton, and it's fun to have you point out all the names of everyone from our era.

"I'm living in Texas now ... yeah Texas! Who would have imagined? I married a girl I met in art class at Kutztown, and we lived in Allentown for a while and have been here since 1986. But I still don't say 'y'all.'

"Anyhow life has been good. I have my own business now doing graphic design and product development (currently working on a line of underwear called SakaNuki based on Japanese-themed art). My wife just opened an art school called 'Createria Studios.'

"We usually get back to Pa. every Christmas with a stay in Allentown and Hazleton. Nothing like being home for the holidays."

You can say that again, Bob.

Finally, George Lazar writes. "Thanks for another great article on the things that mattered most when growing up in Hazleton. I still can see the big M.A. on the side of the Tung-Sol blue water tank. Brought a smile to my face for sure, and it seems just like yesterday.

"You mentioned Dave McGeehan. His sister Janet ('Sunshine') McGeehan died recently. Thought I would let you know. Thanks again for the great articles."

Thanks, George. I knew Janet for years, as sweet a person as you'd ever want to meet. And she was strong, facing her sickness with courage and optimism. I know "Sunshine" is going to be terribly missed by one and all.

Former Hazleton resident Michael Apichella is a writer living in Europe. Visit his website at mapichella.tumblr.com or contact him at apichellaspeaker@yahoo.com.

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Democratic candidates eye taxes to ease wealth gap | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

Express - Online, The

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — Under the banner of fairness, Pennsylvania's Democratic candidates for governor are proposing tax-law changes that would tap wealthy taxpayers and businesses to ease the economic pain of the middle class and the poor.

Front-runner Tom Wolf is advocating an overhaul of the state income tax that would

exclude from taxation every taxpayer's income below a certain amount. Income above that would be taxed at a still-to-be-determined flat rate.

All five Democratic candidates support a new tax on natural gas drilling.

One of them, state Treasurer Rob McCord, advocates a 10 percent tax on the net value of gas. Katie McGinty, a former state environmental protection secretary, wants all revenue from her proposed gas-drilling tax to go toward improving K-12 education.

Wolf and congresswoman Allyson Schwarz favor a 5 percent tax.

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Pennsylvania's Democratic candidates consider tax changes to ease wealth gap | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

Express-Times - Bethlehem Edition - Online, The

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In many cases, their arguments echo the national Democratic Party's rhetoric over the growing gap between the rich and the poor.

The five Democrats are unanimous in their calls for a significant tax on the state's burgeoning natural gas industry after what they say has been nearly four years of grossly inadequate taxation under Republican Gov. Tom Corbett's administration.

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Drilling waste a radioactive topic for environmental watchdogs | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

Herald - Online, The

HARRISBURG —

Environmental watchdogs say a system for tracking radioactive material unearthed during gas drilling depends too much on the industry's self-policing, making it impossible to judge how much waste is generated or how dangerous it might be.

Their concern centers on cuttings — the rock unearthed during the drilling process.

Deepest rocks are sometimes radioactive. They may become more volatile when exposed to chemicals used during fracking, the popular process for releasing

underground reservoirs of natural gas, said Nadia Steinzor, program coordinator for the Oil and Gas Accountability Project of the nonprofit group Earthworks.

During 2012, an estimated 4,175 tons of cuttings were radioactive, said Morgan Wagner, a state Department of Environmental Protection spokeswoman. The DEP does not have an estimate for how much radioactive material was unearthed last year, Wagner said.

Environmentalists say the state's estimates – when they exist – are difficult to verify.

“We don't know the scope of the problem,” said Adam Garber, field director for PennEnvironment. “... It's only (going) to get worse.”

Responding to such concerns, DEP has launched a \$1 million study to measure where radioactive materials are turning up and how they are handled, Wagner said. As of the end of last year, researchers had visited 114 locations across the state, and collected close to 1,000 samples. DEP is expected to release their findings this summer.

Mark Pedersen, president of the Pennsylvania Waste Industries Association, which represents haulers and landfill operators, said those who manage waste from the drilling operations believe there are sufficient checks in place.

“There are two to three sets of eyes on everything,” Pedersen said.

Environmentalists say a handful of episodes have heightened concerns about drilling waste.

Two years ago, state regulators identified “several containers” of waste that were so radioactive, state officials required it to be moved out of state, Wagner said. Those 308 tons of waste were ultimately sent to a facility for radioactive waste disposal in Idaho. Wagner said the problem came to light when the drilling company submitted paperwork seeking to move the waste to a landfill, which is the most common way that radioactive waste is identified.

Then, last April, a Westmoreland County landfill rejected a load of drilling waste when it triggered a radiation alarm. That load was also reportedly shipped to Idaho.

Earlier this month, regulators in North Dakota reported finding black trash bags stuffed with radioactive “drilling socks” – filters used to strain liquid during the drilling process. The Pennsylvania DEP is studying the use and disposal of the same type of filters as part of its study.

A DEP website that tracks the disposal of Marcellus waste includes no reference to either the 2012 or 2013 Idaho shipments. Steinzor said that data gap is typical because the state's system relies on self-reporting by gas drillers.

Data provided by drilling companies show a staggering amount of waste.

Pennsylvania landfills last year accepted 785,000 tons of drill cuttings. Another 81,000 tons were shipped across the border into New York.

Residents there must confront the irony that their state has a moratorium on fracking due its perceived environmental threat, but New York still accepts waste from drilling in Pennsylvania, said Gary Alexander. An attorney, Alexander represents residents who've been fighting to stop the Chemung County Landfill from taking Pennsylvania's drilling waste.

Alexander estimated that a third of the waste going into the Chemung landfill comes from drilling in Pennsylvania. The DEP database shows the landfill accepted 58,000 tons of drill cuttings last year.

Landfill operators have an incentive to accept that waste, said Alexander. Cuttings are four times heavier than normal garbage, and landfills charge by weight.

That incentive also raises questions about how vigilant landfill operators are when it comes to identifying waste they should refuse, he said.

It's a concern shared by residents throughout Pennsylvania. With such a large volume of waste material in the state, Steinzor said there is concern that some of it might be mishandled along the way.

Pedersen said drilling and gas companies in Pennsylvania are required to determine whether their waste is radioactive. They send paperwork to DEP that describes the waste and indicates where it's being sent, he said. Once state regulators give their blessing, the waste can proceed to a landfill.

Wagner said drillers have 90 days to move their waste off-site. All landfills have radiation alarms, she added.

When those are triggered – which happened 995 times in 2012, according to DEP – landfill workers use handheld devices to get a better measure of the radiation, Pedersen said. But landfills don't have to reject waste just because an alarm goes off, he said.

“The alarms are set artificially low,” he said, adding that landfills can accept waste as long as DEP determines the radiation levels not to be dangerous.

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Your opinions: Letters to the editor for March 24 | [View Clip](#)
03/23/2014

Struggles continue until we turn to God

What is the common denominator between both major political parties in today's way of thinking?

Answer: They don't understand the problem, and they have no solution. Elected officials (most, not all) run in circles through their carnal wisdom trying to patch the holes of an America that is coming apart at the seams.

America was founded and made the greatest country in the history of the world by the influence of Christian thinking. Our entire structure is based on Judeo-Christian principles of which the Bible is the anchor of our very foundation. The family, property ownership, inheritance and trial by jury are just a few of the basic tenets of truth taught in holy writ.

Here's the remedy: "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin brings decay to any people," Proverbs 14:34. Virtue and honor elevate a society. When God-fearing uprightness is the hub, it brings the smile of God upon a nation in sundry ways — economic, safety and security, goodness and quality education.

Conversely, when government and its citizens promote and even celebrate open iniquity, society decays. When legislation embraces murder by abortion, pornography, casino and online gambling and sexual immorality, society rots from within.

This runaway locomotive of ungodliness is an open, festering wound that cannot heal without national repentance before Almighty God from President Baracl Obama on down.

Of high accountability are ministers of God who have chosen the road to apostasy.

Homer Snavelly, Cleona

Out with the old, but the new are the same

I was listening to Tom Wolf, who is running for the Democratic nomination to run for governor in November.

He wants to tax the gas companies that are extracting the gas from under the ground. That is all well and good, but we all know that the gas company will just pass the tax on to the consumer.

To my way of thinking, these people that we vote into office just don't have the common sense that they were born with. The senators and representatives, plus all others that are in office or running for office say they are working for the people, but

who are they kidding. If they are working for the people, they would join Social Security and the so-called health care system that is suppose to be so great for the American people instead of having their plans.

We hear that the America people should stand up and vote them out, but what good does that do? The ones coming in will be doing the same.

And so it goes. It is a merry go round with no end in sight.

Dale Matthews, Schaefferstown

Help Pennsylvania breathe easier

As a student at the University of Pittsburgh, I am concerned about the air quality in Pittsburgh and what it will mean for my generation and those to come if something isn't done to address the problem.

We can make a dent in the air pollution if we do one simple thing — limit our energy consumption. This can be done by recycling products, turning off lights and unplugging your phone charger when it's not in use.

Another avenue for improving air quality is to pass clean air legislation. Our state legislature has been making positive steps in this regard, but more needs to be done.

We can also pressure car companies to produce more environmentally friendly vehicles. The freedom to drive a gas-guzzler undermines the freedom of others to breathe clean air. If you support cleaner air, contact your local American Lung Association to see how you can help.

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Watchdogs question drilling self-policing | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

Meadville Tribune - Online, The

HARRISBURG —

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John Finnerty reports from the CNHI Harrisburg Bureau for The Meadville Tribune and other Pennsylvania newspapers owned by Community Newspaper Holdings Inc. Email him at jfinnerty@cnhi.com and follow him on Twitter [@cnhipa](https://twitter.com/cnhipa).

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EDITORIAL: Yet another property tax bill that beats doing nothing | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

Times Herald - Online

Welcome Spring!

Rarely have such words had more meaning than after one of the most miserable winters in memory. We suffered the indignities of 67.6 inches of snow, making it the second snowiest winter on record. For some reason, memories of the winter of 2009-10, just four scant years ago, seem more distant.

Maybe it's because this year's snow was accompanied by brutal, unending cold temperatures that made venturing outside – if even dashing from the car to the office or back into the house – an unpleasant experience.

We endured an ice storm that left much of the region in the dark – without power or heat – for as much as a week.

So we proclaim today the arrival of spring, and its promise of new life.

Unfortunately, it brings with it something else, an old problem.

Specifically, we refer to school taxes. Even as we speak, school tax bills are arriving at homes across Delaware County and the region. At the same time, local school boards are poring over the numbers in next year's fiscal plan. In all too many districts, the red ink is overflowing, equating to one of two equally unpalatable prospects: Job and Curriculum cuts, or tax increases.

It is the siren sounds of spring in Pennsylvania, and it has been for years. That is because this state in large part funds education on the backs of property owners through the property tax. It has created an uneven playing field, particularly in economically depressed regions such as eastern Delaware County. Without a thriving tax base, school boards must rely on home owners to make up the difference.

In more and more instances, senior citizens and those on fixed incomes are literally being taxed out of their homes. Despite a lifetime of paying more than their fair share, despite the fact that their children have long since left the school system, and despite the fact that they have paid off their mortgage, senior citizens have yet to shed the yolk of property taxes.

The issue has been talked about for years in Harrisburg.

Talk is cheap; property taxes are not.

Even the often-discussed (but rarely acted upon) notion of eliminating the property tax, which is once again being debated in Harrisburg, has its own vocal detractors, as well as some real problems.

No one knows that better than Sen. Dominic Pileggi, R-9. The former mayor of Chester understands all too well what kind of burden skyrocketing property taxes places on the backs of struggling home owners. He saw it first-hand in the city, as well as Upland and Chester Township, the municipalities that make up the beleaguered Chester Upland School District.

Just because he now hangs his work hat in Harrisburg, Pileggi has not forgotten the plight of those homeowners.

But the Republican also understands that too much of the current debate surrounding elimination of the property tax is pie-in-the-sky at best, and at worst merely a tax swap. Easing property taxes is offset by increases in the personal income and sales taxes.

But Pileggi also knows that those most at risk of being overrun by rampaging property taxes are seniors and those on fixed incomes.

That's why he's sponsoring Senate Bill 299, which would freeze property taxes for residents who are at least 65 years old and have qualified for a Homestead exemption for at least five years. The bill also would reimburse local school districts for the lost revenue.

Now all it needs is one thing: A funding source.

State Rep. Thaddeus Kirkland, D-159, who also represents much of Chester Upland, has a potential source. That would be the vast deposits of Marcellus Shale now being extracted from the Pennsylvania countryside.

In the cacophony of potential property tax solutions, Senate Bill 299 is a common sense move that accomplishes something else, something that's been needed for far too long.

It's called common cents. These seniors have paid their dues. Now they're clinging to their homes. They shouldn't be taxed out of them.

Senate Bill 299 would be a solid first step in avoiding that painful lesson in the school of hard knocks.

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COMMENTARY: AMY GOODMAN Fukushima damage still gets tallied | [View](#)

Clip
03/23/2014
Times Leader - Online

Three years have passed since the earthquake and tsunami that caused the nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Japan. The tsunami's immediate death toll was more than 15,000, with close to 3,000 still missing. Casualties are still mounting, though, both in Japan and much farther away.

The impact of the Fukushima nuclear meltdown on health and the environment is severe, compounded daily as radioactive pollution continues to pour from the site, owned by the Tokyo Electric Power Company, TEPCO.

In an unusual development, more than 100 U.S. Marines and Navy sailors have joined a class action suit, charging TEPCO with lying about the severity of the disaster as they were rushing to the scene to provide humanitarian assistance. They were aboard the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan and other vessels traveling with the Reagan, engaged in humanitarian response to the disaster. The response was dubbed "Operation Tomodachi," meaning "Operation Friendship."

Lt. Steve Simmons is one of the plaintiffs. Before Fukushima, he was physically robust. Eight months later, he suffered inexplicable health problems. He said on the "Democracy Now!" news hour, that, while driving to work: "I blacked out and drove my truck up on a curb. Following that, I started coming down with what maybe I thought was just maybe a flu, started running fevers. I dropped about 20 to 25 pounds unexpectedly and then started experiencing night sweats, difficulty sleeping."

He was hospitalized three times. Doctors dismissed his concerns about possible radiation poisoning. "Three days later, after I was discharged, I was back in the hospital because my lymph nodes started swelling, and still running constant fevers as high as 102.9."

In April 2012, his legs buckled under him while he was hospitalized. He has relied on a wheelchair ever since. He will be allowed to "medically retire" this coming April.

This is the second attempt to sue TEPCO on behalf of these sailors and Marines. The first lawsuit had eight plaintiffs and was dismissed for technical reasons based on the court's lack of jurisdiction. "By June of 2013, we had 51 sailors and Marines who had contacted us with various illnesses," lead attorney Charles Bonner explained, "including thyroid cancers, testicular cancers, brain cancers, unusual uterine problems, excessive uterine bleeding, all kinds of gynecological problems, problems that you do not see in a population of 20-year-olds, 22-year-olds, 23-year-olds, even 35-year-olds. ... So, now we have filed a class action for approximately a hundred sailors."

As news of the lawsuit spreads, many more will likely join in. The USS Reagan had

at least 5,500 people on board when off the coast of Japan.

You might wonder why the group doesn't sue their employer, the U.S. Navy, as well. "The responsible party for these young sailors' injury is the Tokyo Electric Power Company, the fourth-largest power company in the world," Bonner explained. "Tokyo Electric Power Company failed to tell the public, including the Navy, that they were in an active meltdown."

I interviewed Naoto Kan in his offices in Tokyo last January. He was the prime minister of Japan at the time of the disaster. Kan immediately set up control center to manage the nuclear crisis. Present at the center was a TEPCO executive. Kan told me, "From what I was hearing from the headquarters of TEPCO, and in particular from Mr. Takeguro, who was the former vice president, was, almost no accurate information was being conveyed about what was actually the situation on site."

Frustrated with the stonewalling, Kan flew to the plant to discuss the situation with workers on site. Once staunchly pro-nuclear, Kan now advocates for a nuclear-free Japan.

The ongoing nuclear disaster at Fukushima should serve as a warning to the world. Instead of following the wisdom of Naoto Kan, President Barack Obama is committing public funds to build the first new nuclear power plants in the United States in more than 30 years.

In the wake of Fukushima, Obama's Nuclear Regulatory Commission put out talking points designed to diminish growing public concern with the safety of nuclear power plants in the U.S. NBC News obtained the NRC's internal emails instructing staff to downplay safety risks.

U.S. nuclear plants are not safe. The U.S. sailors and Marines of Operation Tomodachi deserve their day in court. The U.S. public deserves an honest assessment of the grave risks of nuclear power.

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Anti-fracking activist appeals court injunction | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

Times Leader - Online

MONTROSE — A Susquehanna County woman known for her staunch activism against natural gas drilling has been barred from more than 200,000 acres in Pennsylvania.

Vera Scroggins, 63, of northern Susquehanna County, was served in October with a preliminary injunction, signed by Susquehanna County Judge Kenneth W. Seamans,

forbidding her from going onto property owned or leased by Cabot Oil & Gas Corp.

Cabot, based in Houston, Texas, leases or owns about 200,000 acres in the commonwealth, with most of its holdings in Susquehanna County. There are about 532,500 acres in Susquehanna County.

Cabot filed for the injunction Oct. 17, claiming Scroggins had repeatedly trespassed where drilling operations were ongoing, often bringing guests and creating risk to herself and others.

Both parties are to appear May 1 for a trial to determine if a permanent injunction is warranted, but a hearing on the motion to lift the preliminary injunction is scheduled for this morning in the Susquehanna County Courthouse.

Attorneys from the American Civil Liberties Union and Public Citizen Litigation Group have joined the case to represent Scroggins.

In a motion to dismiss the injunction, Scroggins' attorney, Gerald A. Kinchy, argues it is overbroad and prevents her from visiting friends whose properties are leased to Cabot. It also keeps her from going to, among other places, the hospital, the grocery store and several restaurants, the motion argues.

"Scroggins has had to spend hours at the courthouse learning who owns and leases various properties, and she is anxious that she will accidentally go where she is forbidden," the motion says.

In its petition for the preliminary injunction, Cabot said Scroggins trespassed onto properties where Cabot holds leases at least 11 times, ignored posted no-trespassing signs and often hassled workers. Once she used her vehicle to impede truck traffic to a drilling site, and once, while giving an unsanctioned tour on leased property, climbed up onto an storage tank containing brine that was clearly marked "do not climb," injunction documents say.

The injunction says Scroggins is "prohibited from entering property owned and/or leased by Cabot Oil & Gas Corporation including but not limited to well sites, well pads and access roads."

Scroggins' attorney argues the injunction is sweeping and, in addition to hampering her personal life, it impinges on her advocacy work to protest and document gas extraction activities. Scroggins runs a YouTube channel with more than 100 home videos about natural gas drilling, most of them opposing the industry.

Her attorney says Cabot leases mostly sub-surface rights, which shouldn't preclude Scroggins from being on the surface. However, Cabot argues a subsurface lease gives it the "right to reasonable use of the surface, so far as necessary to carry on natural gas operations."

During a deposition on March 3, Scroggins told Cabot lawyer Amy L. Barrette she knew she was trespassing when entering Cabot production sites. When Barrette said the injunction was the only thing keeping her from entering Cabot-leased property, Scroggins answered, "Yeah. Right now, yeah," the transcript says.

Scroggins told Barrette she would normally obey no-trespassing signs unless there was "anything critical that I wanted to maybe see. But yeah, I would normally obey it."

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Democratic candidate for governor McGinty builds name recognition, support |
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03/23/2014
TribLIVE

On the first warm afternoon of March, Katie McGinty trekked across Downtown. She was headed to an appointment in EQT, but the streets of Pittsburgh presented chance encounters.

Two little girls on William Penn Place crossed her path. She leaned down as their stepmother, Sandee Santos, tucked a baby into a car seat. One of the girls, Adriana, will turn 5 soon, McGinty learned.

"What strong, powerful women you're going to be," she told the pair. Santos smiled.

Five minutes earlier, McGinty had closed an afternoon of networking for her gubernatorial campaign in the Omni William Penn Hotel lobby. She left with a campaign check from a woman she met on the spot, embracing her as they parted ways.

"I'm not a career politician, but I've got a track record as a problem solver," McGinty said as she crossed Oliver Avenue. "Someone who brings people together, solves tough problems and gets stuff done."

McGinty is in the five-way May primary of Democrats jockeying to unseat Republican Gov. Tom Corbett this fall. Her candidacy follows a decades-long career in environmental and energy policy, including years as a senior adviser in the Clinton administration and secretary of the state Department of Environmental Protection under former Gov. Ed Rendell.

She sees Pennsylvania's natural resources and academia as opportunities to reboot the commonwealth's middle class. Policy proposals include tax breaks for new businesses and working families. She supports an increase in Pennsylvania's minimum wage

from the federal minimum of \$7.25 to \$10.10 an hour.

Rendell describes McGinty as “a strict moderate,” socially progressive and fiscally conservative. Under her direction, his administration worked to lure renewable energy companies, such as Gamesa and Iberdrola, to Pennsylvania. He remembers being struck by her energy and pragmatism.

“I knew automatically at the end of the interview I would hire her,” he said.

This campaign is McGinty's first bid to hold elected office. She ended 2013 with about \$1.8 million — a figure topped by largely self-funded York County businessman Tom Wolf, and by Treasurer Rob McCord and U.S. Rep. Allyson Schwartz of Philadelphia, who rolled previous fundraising into their war chests.

McGinty's energy ties solicit lucrative backers. Executives from NRG, where she once was a director, First Energy and People's Natural Gas have donated thousands to her campaign.

She has support from environmental interests at the Sierra Club and the National Resources Defense Council, as well as union endorsements, including Pittsburgh's Amalgamated Transit Union Local 8.

McGinty supports imposing a severance tax on Marcellus shale natural gas drilling, a policy vehemently opposed by Republicans who control the governor's mansion and General Assembly.

“A new severance tax will make Pennsylvania less appealing to natural gas companies and kill good-paying jobs in our communities,” said Megan Sweeney, spokeswoman for the Pennsylvania Republican Party.

McGinty said her past positions balanced a commitment to cut bureaucratic red tape while maintaining “the highest standards of environmental protection,” she said.

“You do not help the environment by letting permit applications pile up on a desk,” she said. She pauses, hands resting on the edges of the outdoor metal table near EQT Plaza. “For shame and fire me if I wasn't doing the job in that particular way.”

As the first candidate to buy air time in the race, two days before Wolf's ads hit TV screens, McGinty has made moves to build her name recognition. One television spot tells the story of her upbringing as the second-youngest of 10 children in northeast Philadelphia, in a home with three bedrooms, one bathroom and a postage stamp-sized backyard.

McGinty's father was a police officer who walked the beat for 35 years. Her mother worked nights as a waitress, an inspiration for her policy proposal to pay workers minimum wage on top of gratuities. Dull moments were rare, with friends and

relatives often visiting. Her younger sister, Colleen Maguire of Wayne, remembers how Katie wore her father's headphones from the shooting range while studying, to block out the clamor.

She once envied the valedictorian at her older sister Eileen's graduation.

“I remember her saying that day, ‘At my graduation, I'm going to be valedictorian,’ ” Maguire said. “And sure enough, she was.”

McGinty studied chemistry at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia and received a law degree at Columbia University in 1988. Her policy career started with an American Chemical Society Congressional fellowship, and then-Sen. Al Gore, D-Tenn., hired her to work on climate and environmental issues.

“A little Irish luck,” she said, since Gore's environmental adviser was leaving Washington. In 1993, she was named the first female chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality and advised Gore in his failed 2000 presidential campaign. In December, she received his endorsement for her campaign.

Outside EQT headquarters, McGinty stopped to chat with a young man smoking a tobacco pipe. He referenced his love of musician Frank Zappa, and McGinty revealed her love of Motown, Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash.

The man, Erik Eaton of Murrysville, left the conversation saying he'll vote for McGinty.

“Thanks man, see ya!” McGinty said as she waved him farewell.

“She's real,” Eaton said. “That's the kind of person we need.”

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North Versailles commissioners OK purchasing new police vehicles, a street sweeper | [View Clip](#)
03/23/2014
TribLIVE

North Versailles Township is purchasing several new municipal vehicles.

Commissioners approved the purchase of three new police vehicles and a new street sweeper at a meeting this week.

The total purchase amount for the police vehicles — a Dodge Charger, Ford Explorer and Chevrolet Caprice — is \$120,866. The department will retire three aging cars when the new vehicles arrive.

The township is ordering a new Pelican street sweeper to replace an existing machine. The cost of the new sweeper is \$183,410, to be financed on a five-year lease-to-own program.

Commission president George Thompson said the township has the option of trading in its existing sweeper for \$5,000 through a finance plan but will try to sell the machine on its own first. Thompson said the sweeper potentially could fetch as much as \$9,000 from a Marcellus shale drilling outfit.

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A little quiet, please | [View Clip](#)

03/22/2014

Beaver County Times - Online

This site is optimized for mobile devices with no download required. I am writing about the fracking trucks on my road, in Ohioville.

They go by so fast that I cannot walk on the edge of the road, anymore. My family walks along our road for exercise, sometimes. It also seems dangerous to get the mail from the end of the driveway.

The trucks pass by five or six at a time, going north and south at the same time. The noise does not stop all day, and we cannot concentrate doing our schoolwork. All of those truck also make more pollution on the earth and in our town. I like it when it is quiet in our neighborhood.

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THE WEEK AT A GLANCE

03/22/2014

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

NOTED + QUOTED

YOU DON'T SAY?

ADVANCE PLANNING

* Since 2001, the number of daily flights at Pittsburgh International Airport has plummeted from more than 600 to an average of 150. The Allegheny County Airport Authority is seeking a new chief executive officer in hopes of reversing the tailspin.

* Paleontologists from the Carnegie Museum of Natural History and elsewhere spent nine years studying a new collection of dinosaur bones from North Dakota before declaring the discovery of a new species: the 11 1/2-foot long *Anzu wyliei* oviraptor they nicknamed a giant "chicken from hell."

Allegheny County Council expects within two weeks to take up Executive Rich Fitzgerald's controversial proposal to allow gas drilling beneath Deer Lakes Park, which would bring the county millions of dollars in annual revenue but has drawn safety concerns from local residents.

PHOTO 1; Caption: PHOTO: THE WEEK AT A GLANCE

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COALITION PUSHING FOR ACTION ON NEVILLE COKE PLANT CHRONIC POLLUTION VIOLATIONS DRAW IRE 03/22/2014

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Aaron Stubna, the owner of the Lincoln Barbershop, a cozy, three-chair, shoebox of a shop on Bellevue's main street, has had it with the smelly pollution that pours from the Shenango coke works on nearby Neville Island and often blankets his community.

And Judy McAuley, who opened her eco-friendly Happy Baby Co. store in Bellevue last fall and has lived in Bellevue or neighboring Avalon for 11 years, said those emissions have put the health of community residents, especially children, at risk.

Mr. Stubna and Ms. McAuley are two of a loose, 36-member, coalition of small business owners, environmental organizations, unions and faith leaders calling for the Allegheny County Health Department to impose much tighter controls on the coke works or shut it down until the facility can meet health-based air pollution standards.

Those demands were contained in a letter delivered to Health Department director Karen Hacker on Thursday. The department is two months into negotiating a consent agreement with Shenango to settle chronic violations of air quality standards that occurred on 330 days in a 432-day period ending Sept. 30, 2013.

"The Health Department needs to seriously address the toxic pollution coming from Shenango," Mr. Stubna said. "Coke-oven emissions are some of the most toxic around and Shenango is constantly exceeding the standards."

The 52-year-old Shenango facility, owned since 2008 by DTE Energy of Ann Arbor,

Mich., has 56 coke ovens and 150 employees. It's located on highly industrialized Neville Island five miles down the Ohio River from Pittsburgh's Point. Bellevue and Avalon are downwind.

The facility has a long history of air pollution problems pockmarked by federal consent orders in 1980, 1993 and 2000, a county consent order in 2005, and a joint federal-county consent order in 2012. Those enforcement actions imposed fines totaling more than \$3.75 million since 1990, and all contain requirements that Shenango bring its air pollution emissions under control.

Randi Berris, a DTE spokeswoman, said the company was aware of Shenango's "legacy" when it purchased the facility and has been working with the county Health Department to improve the plant's performance.

Mr. Stubna is skeptical. "How is Shenango allowed to pay fine after fine for these numerous violations and not get shut down?" he said. "The state will shut down my barbershop for minor violations like not changing my barbicide [the blue liquid that cleans the combs]. What Shenango is doing down there is a lot more dangerous to our health and needs to be addressed."

Numerous peer-reviewed scientific studies have also conclusively documented the links between air pollution exposure and certain diseases, including heart and lung diseases.

Emissions from coking facilities, which bake coal at high temperatures to produce coke used in making steel, are among the most toxic of industrial emissions. The Shenango coke works, which began operations in 1962, produces more than 300,000 tons of coke a year and annually emits hundreds of tons of nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, small airborne particles and volatile organic compounds, including benzene.

Small airborne particles can contribute to respiratory problems, lung damage and premature death, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and benzene is a known human carcinogen.

A 2010 Post-Gazette series, "Mapping Mortality," found that based on state Department of Health mortality statistics, the death rate from respiratory disease in Bellevue from 2000 through 2008 was 46 percent higher than the national average and mortality from heart disease was 40 percent higher. Lung cancer rates were 55 percent above the national average. Avalon mortality rates were also higher than the national averages by 21.5 percent for respiratory disease, 28.7 percent for lung cancer and almost 15 percent for heart disease.

The Rev. Dennis Buranosky, at the Church of the Assumption, a Roman Catholic parish in Bellevue, said he sees links between high air pollution levels and many of his trips to the cemetery.

"I see more and more of my parishioners who never smoked dying of lung cancer," said Father Buranosky, who signed the letter for his parish. "I probably bury 65 people a year and cancer and lung disease are big causes."

The coalition's letter to the Health Department cited recent state Department of Health statistics showing, "children in the Northgate School District have the highest incidence of asthma in the state -- more than double the state average."

Ms. McAuley said numerous studies show exposure to air pollutants can damage the health of pregnant women, babies and children, and result in poor birth outcomes such as low birth weight, premature birth and certain birth defects. Air pollution is also linked to higher incidences of asthma and allergies in children.

"As parents we worry about the products we expose our babies to from the time they are in the womb," said Ms. McAuley, owner of the baby store in Bellevue.

"But while a pregnant woman living in Bellevue can choose not to paint her baby's nursery to avoid the toxic fumes ... she can't do anything to avoid breathing the polluted air where she live without some help from the Health Department."

Shutdown not an option

Jim Thompson, the Health Department's deputy director of environmental health, acknowledged Friday that Shenango's compliance record is "horrendous," and he "shares the frustration" expressed by the group. But he said shutting down the coking operation is not an option under consideration in the ongoing consent order negotiations because a shutdown would damage the coke ovens, probably beyond repair.

"Coke operations require a tremendous amount of ongoing maintenance and upkeep and the previous owner of Shenango didn't have the money to keep up good operation," Mr. Thompson said. "DTE had fallen into that same trap, and going forward we will be taking every step we can to ensure they will comply."

He said DTE has already taken some corrective actions to reduce fugitive emissions of coke oven gases and opacity (smoke) violations, and demonstrated improved compliance over the past three weeks. He said the consent order is about 90 percent completed and expects it will be completed in three weeks.

Shenango's emissions were a contributing factor to Avalon, a municipality just north of Bellevue, having the dirtiest air in Allegheny County in 2010, according to Health Department monitoring data.

Ms. Berris, DTE's spokeswoman, cited readings from the county's Avalon monitor that meet air-quality standards for the last three years as "proof we've improved." Mr. Thompson said there were "a number of factors," including Shenango's improved

performance, that contributed to the lower monitoring numbers.

Ms. Berris said DTE has invested \$8 million for capital improvements at Shenango since it bought the facility, and has plans to spend a total of \$34 million there through 2017.

"We've made changes that will have a lasting impact on the health of the area," Ms. Berris said. "We acknowledge we still have work to do, and we're working to reach our goal of being 100 percent in compliance with county, state and federal standards."

DTE Energy owns and operates one other coking facility, the EES coke works in southwest Detroit, which it purchased in October 2004. In 2007 the EPA filed a notice of violation against DTE for emissions violations. Ms. Berris said the company made significant improvements to its emissions controls to achieve compliance.

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Falcon Drilling adds three rigs to fleet | [View Clip](#)

03/22/2014

Indiana Gazette - Online, The

Falcon Drilling Company LLC recently purchased three new drilling rigs, adding Marcellus horizontal and Utica top-hole capacity to the existing fleet.

The three 250-ton MD Cowan Super Singles, which have been drilling Marcellus horizontal wells in northeastern Pennsylvania, are mechanical singles capable of drilling multiple shale formations including the Marcellus, Fayetteville, West Texas and Barnett shale plays, along with niche work in the Utica and Eagle Ford shale.

According to Falcon Drilling President Dan Donahue, Falcon is committed to helping customers solve their drilling challenges. This purchase is the next step on the road to bringing solutions to the Appalachian drilling market.

"We will be able to provide efficient top-hole drilling services in the deeper Utica shale play in Ohio, as well the Marcellus shale wells in Pennsylvania and West Virginia," Donahue said in a release.

All rigs are focused on top-hole vertical air drilling and oil and gas horizontal drilling in the Marcellus and Utica shale plays.

A major financial institution provided financing to support the transaction, continuing its long-term relationship with Falcon Drilling.

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Miller, William Stroud "Bill" | [View Clip](#)

03/22/2014

Reporter - Online, The

WILLIAM STROUD MILLER William Stroud ("Bill") Miller, 69, died peacefully on February 6, 2014, in Sentara Virginia Beach General Hospital after a debilitating illness. The second child of Samuel D. Miller, Jr., and Jane (Stroud) Miller, Bill graduated from A. D. Eisenhower High School in Norristown PA. He received a BA degree in economics from Albion College, Albion MI, and an MA degree in higher education administration from Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI. At Albion he was elected to Omicron Delta Kappa, the national college leadership fraternity. Bill spent his entire working career in the fields of college admissions and college student financial aid. He served as an assistant in admissions and financial aid at Albion and then at Davidson College, Davidson, NC, between 1966 and 1974. In 1974 he became the Director of Student Financial Aid at Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA, where he served until 1981, when he joined the staff of the College Board. While at Old Dominion Bill was elected president of the Virginia Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators. With the College Board, Bill served in positions of increasing responsibility in the Evanston, IL, New York City and Reston, VA, offices. He retired in 2002 as Director of Marketing and User Support, Financial Aid Services, a position in which he managed marketing and product support for financial aid services used by more than 600 colleges, universities and corporate scholarship programs in awarding financial assistance to students. In his retirement Bill was a member of the Norfolk Lions Club, of which he was president in 2006-07, and the Norfolk Sports Club. Bill is survived by his older brother, Samuel D. Miller, III, of Upper Gwynedd, his nephews David William Miller (Chevon), of Montgomery Township, and Stephen Raymond Miller, of Doylestown, his grandniece, Chloe Jane Miller, and a number of cousins, the closest of whom were Frances Treisbach and her brother George Treisbach. In lieu of flowers, gifts may be made in Bill's memory to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Philip Merrill Environmental Center, 6 Herndon Avenue, Annapolis, MD 21403. A public memorial service for Bill will be held on March 29, 2014, at 11 a.m. at Church of the Messiah, 1001 DeKalb Pike, Lower Gwynedd, PA. The family will greet friends and relatives beginning at 10:15 AM. Interment is private. Arrangements by the William R. May Funeral Home, Inc., 142 North Main Street, North Wales, PA. (www.mayfuneralhome.com)

Published in The Reporter on Mar. 24, 2014

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Shale drilling cited in region's job boom

03/21/2014

Pittsburgh Tribune-Review

Employment in the manufacturing sector is rising and Western Pennsylvania is among regions demonstrating rapid growth because of energy-intensive industries, a report for the U.S. Conference of Mayors found.

Energy-intensive manufacturing employment will expand by more than 1 percent per year nationwide, with 72 percent of those jobs in metropolitan areas, the report said, noting that the Marcellus shale play in Pennsylvania and Bakken shale drilling in North Dakota significantly fueled that expansion.

Energy-related manufacturing is credited with boosting the economies of several metropolitan areas, and inexpensive natural gas and unconventional oil plays hold potential for supporting long-term growth, the report said.

Pittsburgh remains a national leader in iron and steel manufacturing jobs, second only to Chicago with 8,145 jobs in 2012. Employment in iron and steel is forecast to contract by 0.9 percent annually in Pittsburgh through 2020.

Sectors showing potential for growth in Pittsburgh include fabricated metals manufacturing, with jobs expected to grow 1.4 percent annually to 16,606 by 2020, and plastics and rubber production, with predicted annual employment expansion of less than 1 percent to 4,727 jobs by 2020.

"Despite a large employment decrease during the recession nationwide, you'll see that the oil and gas industry grew during the 2007-to-2012 period because of the growth in the oil and gas industry, especially in shale gas, and Pennsylvania led that growth," said Jennifer Cruz, an economist with the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The Philadelphia Federal Reserve Bank said this week that its business activity index rebounded to 9.0 in March from negative 6.3 in February. Any reading above zero indicates expansion in manufacturing. Total annual average employment in Pennsylvania declined by 1.3 percent between 2007 and 2012 to 5,578,414; by contrast, employment in the oil and natural gas industry increased by 259.3 percent over the period, the Labor Department said last week.

"One advantage is that the companies that supply those manufacturing industries are also going to want to base here, since the business is already established here," said economist Gus Faucher at PNC Financial Services Group.

Sustaining growth in manufacturing will be a challenge in the long run, Faucher said, as Western Pennsylvania tries to sustain population.

Only five of 22 counties in the tri-state region of Western Pennsylvania and bordering

counties in Ohio and West Virginia reported steady growth in population since 2000, according to the Census Bureau. The 27 western rural counties in Pennsylvania declined by 0.9 percent during that decade, and they lost 0.5 percent from 2010 to 2012.

About 8 percent of the region's workers hold manufacturing jobs, according to the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, roughly on par with national averages.

Vivian Salama is a staff writer for Trib Total Media.

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Residents sue city and Kroger | [View Clip](#)

03/24/2014

Petersburg Progress-Index - Online

COLONIAL HEIGHTS - A couple whose home is located close to a proposed Kroger grocery store is suing the city and the grocery store chain. The proposed store would be located on the site of the city's former courthouse on Temple Avenue.

Plaintiffs Dennis J. Livingston and Lou Jean Livingston claim that the city didn't provide appropriate public notice for input on its working agreement with Kroger. The lawsuit also states that the city amended its comprehensive plan and changed the zoning to allow the 90,000-square-foot-plus grocery store to be built close to residential areas.

The Livingstons live behind the Kroger site at the corner of MacArthur and Hamilton avenues. They claim their property would also be impacted by increased traffic, as well as light and noise pollution, and parking lot runoff.

The lawsuit was filed March 10 in Colonial Heights Circuit Court by attorney Dennis J. Livingston.

The Livingstons are requesting that any ordinances relating to the development be made no longer valid. They are also seeking damages and attorney costs.

The lawsuit states the zoning changes represent "illegal spot zoning and contract zoning that serves the interest of a single land owner, i.e. Kroger, rather than furthering the general public welfare including the welfare of the citizens. Further, the zoning ordinance represents unconstitutional special legislation because the ordinance benefits a single entity, Kroger, to the detriment of all others including other persons who may wish to purchase the former Colonial Heights Courthouse property."

To prove that the city went ahead with plans before public input, the Livingstons reference public hearing dates and a press release issued by the city.

The city issued a press release and held a press conference with Kroger officials on Sept. 6, 2013, announcing the proposal to redevelop the site, which was the first time many residents heard about the plan despite the fact that notices to attend a public hearing on the redevelopment ran in The Progress-Index on Aug. 31 and Sept. 6. The public hearing was scheduled for Sept. 10.

More than a dozen people spoke against the project at the public hearing, including Lou Jean Livingston. After the hearing, council unanimously approved entering negotiations to sell the property to Kroger for \$2.6 million.

City Attorney Hugh Fisher said the city gave more public notice than required.

"I don't think any of the allegations have merit," he said. "I don't see where they will prevail. They had adequate notice. In fact, the city gave more notice than it had to, including newspaper and personal notice. What happened wasn't contract zoning or spot zoning."

- Leah Small may be reached at 722-5172 or lsmall@progress-index.com.

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Hall is hopeful permit OK is nearing | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

Martinsville Bulletin - Online

A long-sought grading permit for Commonwealth Crossing Business Centre (CCBC) is in the "higher levels of approval," according to County Administrator Tim Hall.

According to previous Bulletin reports, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been reluctant to issue the permit due to the lack of a company that has publicly committed to the site and prepared detailed blueprints. Yet a company will not relocate to the site without an approved permit.

"We've been in pretty good contact with (the Army Corps of Engineers) for a while," Hall said. "They're getting more comfortable with our responses to their questions. There's been a lot of give and take."

The list of questions that the corps has is shrinking, Hall said, and he is hopeful that the permit dilemma, which first was reported by the Bulletin in October 2012, soon will be resolved.

“When and if we receive (the permit), we want to move as quickly as possible,” he said.

To that end, the Henry County Board of Supervisors will consider awarding a contract for mitigation bank credits for CCBC at its 3 p.m. meeting on Tuesday.

According to Hall, officials with a construction project must measure its environmental impact and then buy mitigation bank credits, which are measured in linear feet. For example, if a construction project were to cause runoff in one linear foot of a nearby stream, the project officials would have to buy credit for one linear foot of stream from a mitigation bank.

The mitigation bank property that the credit is purchased for will remain protected and off-limits to construction, which helps offset the environmental impact of the construction project.

Tim Pace, director of engineering for Henry County Public Service Authority, said that the CCBC grading project will affect an estimated 8,165 linear feet of stream, 0.28 of an acre of forested wetlands and 0.03 of an acre of emergent wetlands (those under standing water).

According to Pace, the mitigation plan that the county has presented to the Army Corps of Engineers and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) will place a portion of county property into preservation, which will cover roughly half of the needed credits, while the remaining credits will be purchased from one of three mitigation banks in the Roanoke River Basin.

The CCBC site is off U.S. 220 South near the Virginia/North Carolina border. While the facility will be in Virginia, Hall said, one access road will partially be in North Carolina, and as a result, mitigation bank credits also will need to be purchased in North Carolina.

“Of course, we're going to be rewarding these (credit contracts) contingent on Army Corps and DEQ approval,” Pace said, “but we're further along today than we have been in the last 24 months.”

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Going vegan, getting over animal-based foods: Bell explains how and why | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

Martinsville Bulletin - Online

Going vegan has allowed Nancy Bell to get rid of problems such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, being overweight, depression and troubles sleeping well, she

said.

Bell talked about how to adopt a vegan lifestyle at a recent New College Institute lecture. A vegan diet is plant-based, with no food from animals (meat, dairy products, eggs).

To improve her health, “I had to understand the effect food has on the body and understand (the bad results of) the Western diet, the diet of affluence,” she said.

People in Asia have maintained a higher level of health than Americans, she said. However, “as soon as we started sending (fast food restaurants) to China and Japan, they started having the same problems” with health as people in America do.

In terms of beginning to recognize the dangers of practices society takes for granted, “we are with diet, especially with meat, where we were with tobacco 20 years ago,” she said.

American “lifestyle is turning diabetes into one of the worse and fastest growing epidemics,” she said. “Since 1950, fat intake has quadrupled, sugar intake has tripled (and) animal protein has doubled.”

Eating animal products has some barbaric consequences, she said. Eating meat means “a dead carcass rots in our systems before we get rid of it.”

It may seem hard to eat in a new way at first, but a vegan diet will feel natural after a few weeks. “If you do something for 21 days, it becomes a habit,” she said.

To achieve a vegan diet, Bell recommended to:

- avoid animal products for six weeks;
- avoid processed foods;
- learn to use new foods; and
- learn new methods of food preparation.

Bell recommended going vegan with a five day process. On the first two days, eat only grains (millet, oatmeal, rice, barley, quinoa, etc.); it's OK to sweeten them with stevia, agave or honey. On the third day, add fruit; on the fourth, vegetables; on the fifth, seeds and nuts.

After that, “break out the vegan recipe books” and try recipes, she said.

Vegan meals are easier to prepare when you work according to the four plant-based food groups: whole grains; legumes, seeds and nuts; vegetables; and fruits, she said.

Cravings counteract the best of dietary intentions for many people. “The key to having no cravings is to use new types of sugars: stevia, agave and honey,” Bell said.

In preparing food to eat, process or cook the foods as little as possible. Eat as many locally produced foods in season as possible. “The closer to home (the food is grown and) you buy it, the better it is for you and the planet,” she said.

Apart from health benefits, the vegan diet is gentler on natural resources and the environment than an animal-based diet, she said. Twenty-percent of man-made pollution is from the meat industry, Bell said. It takes 40 calories of fossil fuel energy to create 1 calorie of feed-lot beef in the United States.

Getting support and learning about food helps make the transition to a new way of eating. Bell recommended the following sources:

- websites: FatFreeVegan.com or www.21daykickstart.org.
- movie: “Forks Over Knives.” In Martinsville, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church will have a series of vegan and health lectures. They will begin with the showing of “Forks Over Knives” at 6 p.m. April 7. Refreshments will be served, door prizes will be given and Dr. John Kelly will lead a question and answer session. The church is located at 339 Chatham Road (just past the Leatherwood Food Lion). RSVP to 650-8899 or 638-4438.
- Books: “Eat to Live” by Dr. Joel Fuhrman; “The China Study” by T. Colin Campbell, Thomas M. Campbell II, Howard Lyman and John Robbins; “Salt Sugar Fat: How the Food Giants Hooked Us” by Michael Moss and “Eating Animals” by Jonathan Safran Foer.

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Can plants take on new roles with tiny carbon materials? | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

News Leader - Online, The

Michael Strano thinks our use of plants has been too limited.

Sure, we've manipulated them to produce more food, sprout prettier flowers and grow faster. But Strano, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Mass., wants to give them totally new functions as sensors, antennae and tiny power plants.

"For millennia, we've used plants for wood, fruit and burning - very low-tech functions," said Strano, a professor of chemical engineering. "It's time to ask whether

they can form the basis for very sophisticated technologies."

Along with colleagues, including plant biologist Juan Pablo Giraldo, Strano has modified the function of a small flowering plant, *Arabidopsis thaliana*, to transform it into a living sensor for the nitric oxide that leads to air pollution. The two say they could imagine vast crop fields studded with the occasional plant sensor, which could, if exposed to nitric oxide, light up enough to be detected by a camera and report on air quality.

In a paper published recently in the journal *Nature Materials*, they also showed that they could enhance photosynthesis, the first step toward using plants to make more biofuels. Plants have an incredible ability to make energy from nothing more than sunlight and air - so why not extend that ability to create energy in new materials that can repair themselves like plants and not only don't pollute but actually absorb greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide in the process, Giraldo said.

This may sound far-fetched, but James J. Collins, a biomedical engineer at Boston University, said he was impressed with the team's ideas and how much they've accomplished so far. No one has previously linked plant biology with synthetic biology, which designs and constructs biological devices for useful purposes, said Collins, a founder of that field.

"I thought it was fascinating," Collins said of the new paper. "This opens up more rapid ways you can modify organisms together."

Strano and his team inserted incredibly tiny particles directly into the chloroplasts - the part of the cell where photosynthesis takes place - to lower the concentration of damaging oxygen radicals. This allowed those chloroplasts to work and produce energy in a dish.

The same tiny particles delivered through the leaves appeared to enable the chloroplasts to capture green light, the kind green plants normally don't absorb. This allowed the modified plant to capture 30% more light energy than normal plants.

In another experiment, the team used nanoparticles that can detect nitric oxide to turn the plant into a pollution sensor.

There's still a long way to go before this field, which Strano calls plant nanobionics, will be ready for the real world. But the promise is real, Strano said.

Plants have no moving parts, they repair themselves, and they need little more than sunlight to begin the production process.

For instance, Strano envisions trees that work as cellphone towers, instead of building cellphone towers that look like trees.

"We haven't thought about merging this inorganic world with the biology of the tree," he said, but "that's completely within the realm of possibility."

In a different lab at MIT, biological engineer Timothy Lu and his colleagues are working to grow materials like electrical switches, solar materials and living glues.

"What biology is really good at is you plant something small and it grows. Essentially what we're doing is designing cells that can grow useful materials for us," Lu said.

In a paper published Sunday also in *Nature Materials*, Lu and his team tinkered with the genes of a strain of harmless bacteria, turning the microbes into an electrical switch.

Don't expect one of these in a nearby hardware store anytime soon, but Lu says the first products made by these bacteria factories could be available in the next few years.

"It's definitely something we can do now in the lab, it's a question of what's the best way to bring that to the world."

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Read the original story: [Can plants take on new roles with tiny carbon materials?](#)

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Foreign traffic laws crank up chaos | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

News Leader - Online, The

It was an open-ended question, the kind you learn to ask after renting countless cars: Is there anything else I should know about driving here?

"Yes," said the Hertz agent at Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris, after taking a glance at my keys. "You can't drive this car in Paris."

Turns out my visit last week coincided with some of the city's worst smog in years. In an effort to cut back on pollution, only cars with odd-numbered license plates could drive in the City of Light. Mine had an even number.

Fortunately, I wasn't driving to Paris.

But that question - what else do I need to know? - is always a useful one to ask. Additional restrictions may apply, particularly if you're driving overseas. Drivers

report being hit with high fines and mysterious tickets and they don't know whether to pay them. There's no easy solution.

Paris is hardly the only city that restricts vehicle traffic. London's \$16.50-per-day Congestion Charge affects vehicles operating from 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. on weekdays. If you forget, you'll pay a \$214.50 fine, reduced to \$107 if paid within 14 days, plus an administrative fee if your car rental company handles the transaction.

That's what happened to Vanessa Morton, a vintner from Dallas, when she drove into the wrong part of London on a recent trip. "Five months later, our rental car agency sent us a letter advising they had charged our credit card for over \$200 in fines, which we discovered they were entitled to do under the terms and conditions of the rental agreement," she recalls.

In São Paulo, your car is assigned a day of rest to cut down on traffic. For example, if your plate ends in 1 or 2, you're not allowed to drive in the city limits on Mondays, says Suzanne Garber, who works for a New Brunswick, N.J.-based non-profit group. The rules are enforced by cameras, which also catch lead-footed drivers in the act.

"I've learned from personal experience on both fronts," she says.

Before we go any further, a little disclaimer: Most of my columns feature intractable problems and improbable resolutions, thanks to the advocacy work I do on the side. Not this one. I've never been able to talk my way out of a traffic ticket, let alone someone else's.

But if I could, I would forgive all traffic violations against car rental customers in Italy. They are by far the single biggest source of consumer complaints about international car rentals that I receive in my work as a consumer advocate.

For example, Peggy Kroll, an outreach coordinator for a non-profit organization in West Palm Beach, Fla., traveled to northern Italy with three friends in 2012. She was shocked when one of her companions, who had rented the car, received two additional bills almost a full year after they'd returned the vehicle. The violations, for illegally entering a limited traffic area and for driving in a lane for public transport, didn't make sense to her.

"None of us was aware of any signage indicating that we were in contravention to the laws of the town," she says. Still, her friend paid the fine.

Here's where things get a little fuzzy. Because the notices sometimes aren't in English, it's hard to know who's behind the bill - the municipality or the car rental company. It's also difficult to discern what you're paying - a car rental company processing fee, or the actual ticket, or a combination of both. And then there's the issue of what will happen if you refuse to settle up.

"No one knows," says Elizabeth Knight, an American attorney who writes a blog about Rome called RomIfYouWantTo.com. "But I would not risk it if the traveler ever plans on returning to Italy, as fines for those with unpaid tickets can be extraordinary. I have heard of vehicles being confiscated due to unpaid tickets. Imagine being left on the side of the road in Tuscany with your screaming children, having had your rented Fiat confiscated."

I can't. There has to be a better way of handling moving violations for international visitors. At a minimum, motorists should know what laws they've broken and soon after their trip, not months or years later. And ideally, we should have a clearer idea of what we're paying and our options, including what will happen if we don't.

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Read the original story: Foreign traffic laws crank up chaos

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Key recognition for Tangier Island | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

News Leader - Online, The

Tangier Island, a speck of land in the middle of the Chesapeake Bay where islanders speak a hybrid English accent, is headed to the state's catalog of historic places and a likely spot on the National Register of Historic Places.

Proponents of the designations are hopeful the recognition will raise awareness of the remote, low-lying fishing outpost and the threats it faces from rising bay waters and fierce storms. The designations also make loans available for damage caused by Hurricane Sandy and for historic preservation tax credits, among other benefits.

The 1,001-acre Tangier Island Historic District was approved Thursday for a listing on the Virginia Landmarks Registry. The entry now goes on to the National Park Service for consideration for the National Register of Historic Places. The district consists of the entire island, save for the airport.

Marc Wagner, director of capital region preservation for the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, sized up Tangier's chances of landing on the National Register as "very, very good." He said there's an interest in Washington in adding Chesapeake Bay historic sites to the nation's list of important places.

Besides educating younger islanders about their own history, Wagner said the historic recognition could help others on Tangier and their quest to protect their vulnerable outpost.

“Everybody I talk to there — the mayor, residents, former mayors and town council members — tell me a dramatic loss of acres of land during these hurricanes,” Wagner said. “They’re really lobbying hard to get breakwaters and more protective features built, especially on the western side of the island.”

Rising seas, storms and the settling of land from a meteor that carved out the bay millions of years ago have made Tangier a disappearing island.

Once inhabited by up to 1,000 residents, the island's current population of 500 is crowded today on several ridges of high ground, still only several feet above sea water.

The working class island has been a time capsule because of its location in the center of the bay. While a popular day trip in warmer weather, only one ferry from Maryland sales there during the offseason.

Many islanders still speak a “unique hybrid” accent that dates to the island's settlers, primarily from along England's southwest coast.

John Smith, the intrepid and boastful Jamestown settler, is believed to be the first European to step foot on the island four centuries ago. He named it Russell Isles, after his doctor. The origin of its current name is unclear, Wagner said.

The narrow lanes that dissect the island are primarily traversed by golf carts. The dead are now buried close to homes, away from the sea.

Officials have announced that a seawall and jetty will be constructed at a cost of \$4.2 million. The federal government will pay about \$3.2 million, with the state picking up the rest.

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Anti-fracking activist banned from Pennsylvania land heads to court | [View Clip](#)
03/23/2014
Virginia Gazette - Online, The

David DeKok Reuters

12:03 a.m. EDT, March 24, 2014 HARRISBURG, Pennsylvania (Reuters) - An anti-fracking activist is set to ask a Pennsylvania judge on Monday to lift an injunction that bars her from her local hospital, grocery and other properties that sit atop vast lands leased by a Texas-based company for shale gas extraction.

A five-month-old injunction prohibits Vera Scroggins, 63, of Brackney, Pennsylvania,

from setting foot onto 40 percent of Susquehanna County that is leased by . Topics X Petroleum Industry Washington, DC Energy Resources At Monday's hearing in Susquehanna County Court of Common Pleas in Montrose, Pennsylvania, Scroggins and her lawyers from the Pennsylvania ACLU and Public Citizen in Washington, D.C., will argue that the injunction was legally flawed, unconstitutional, and set a dangerous precedent by making much of the region where she lives off limits.

Judge Kenneth Seamans, who issued the injunction in October at the request of Cabot, will rule on the request.

"In the company's view, the right to extract gas also includes the right to control the movements of an individual protesting the company's activities," Scroggins said in court documents. "In short, the right to extract gas is, according to the company, also the right to banish."

Scroggins is known for recording anti-fracking video footage, some of which was used in "Gasland," an Oscar-nominated documentary by Josh Fox.

Fracking is the controversial process of injecting water, chemicals, and sand into the underground shale formation to extract oil and gas. It has brought about a gas boom in recent years in northeastern Pennsylvania, but also concerns about its impact on the environment.

According to Cabot, Scroggins engaged in at least 11 incidents of trespassing to make her anti-fracking videos or lead tours, one of which included the participation of celebrities Susan Sarandon, Yoko Ono, and Sean Lennon.

Cabot spokesman George Stark said the company is open to a modification of the injunction limiting it to actual gas facilities and the roads leading to them.

"Cabot's primary concern is with operational sites where safety issues are concerned," he said, adding that Cabot supports freedom of expression.

(Editing by Barbara Goldberg) HARRISBURG, Pennsylvania (Reuters) - An anti-fracking activist is set to ask a Pennsylvania judge on Monday to lift an injunction that bars her from her local hospital, grocery and other properties that sit atop vast lands leased by a Texas-based company for shale gas extraction.

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Anti-fracking activist banned from Pennsylvania land heads to court | [View Clip](#) **03/23/2014** ***Townhall***

By David DeKok

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(Editing by Barbara Goldberg)

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N.C. judge rejects Duke's call to stay coal ash ruling | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

Virginian-Pilot - Online

Posted to: Duke Energy Environment News North Carolina

(Randall Hill | The Associated Press)" vocusinstance="0">

Girls play on a soccer field near the L.V. Sutton Complex operated by Duke Energy

in Wilmington, N.C. on Feb. 19, 2014. Documents and interviews collected by The Associated Press show how Duke's lobbyists prodded Republican legislators to tuck a 330-word provision in a regulatory reform bill running nearly 60 single-spaced pages. Though the bill never once mentions coal ash, the change allowed Duke to avoid any costly cleanup of contaminated groundwater leaching from its unlined dumps.
(Randall Hill | The Associated Press)

(Randall Hill | The Associated Press)" style="color: #009DDD;" id="more_photos" vocusinstance="0">View full-size photo |

RALEIGH, N.C.

A judge is rejecting Duke Energy's attempt to stop a ruling that would force the company to take immediate action to clean up its coal ash dumps.

Wake County Superior Court Judge Paul Ridgeway ruled two weeks ago that regulators are failing to properly apply state law to address groundwater pollution at the toxic ash pits — and the company must take immediate action to correct the problem.

But Duke asked Ridgeway to stay the ruling until the company could appeal.

Duke officials did not immediately return telephone calls seeking comment Thursday.

Attorneys for the Southern Environmental Law Center who filed the case praised the decision.

North Carolina has 14 coal-fired plants and 33 ash dumps spread across the state — all stored in unlined, leaky pits near public waterways.

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Welcome return in the Lafayette | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

Virginian-Pilot - Online

The Virginian-Pilot

© March 24, 2014

Environmental workers spent sweaty hours last summer lowering concrete balls into the Lafayette River to provide sanctuary for baby oysters.

Their efforts continued years of work to help regenerate the oyster population in the long-polluted river, and the concrete helped to create a fourth artificial reef.

It has been an arduous journey in a waterway that has been closed to shellfish

harvesting since 1934 because of bacteria.

So this year's discovery of large and apparently quite old natural oyster reefs in the Lafayette - in the heavily traveled waters between the Granby Street and Hampton Boulevard bridges, no less - brought surprise and no small measure of happy excitement.

Oysters are nature's filters. They can remove algae and sediment to clean filthy waters.

Growing and restoring populations of oysters to waterways like the Lafayette and Elizabeth rivers is crucial to their health. As The Pilot's Aaron Applegate reported, scientists were actually looking for sites to create additional artificial reefs when they discovered natural ones in the Lafayette. Images from a submersible camera showed 10 reefs ranging from three to 17 acres with oysters as large as a man's hand.

"When we pulled up some of these samples, we knew we were seeing something no one had seen since the 1940s," said Russell Burke, a Christopher Newport University biology professor.

It gave them a glimpse of the past and hopefully of the future.

It's too early to celebrate the return of Lafayette oysters to our tables. The water still isn't clean enough to allow harvesting.

But we can celebrate the efforts of many to protect and improve our environment. The Elizabeth River Project has worked through businesses, schools and homeowners to improve the state of that river. Other groups, including the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and Lynnhaven River Now, have cultivated oysters in our waterways, work that led another endangered oyster, from the once filthy Lynnhaven, to return to our diets.

At one time less than 1 percent of that river was open to shellfish harvesting; now more than 40 percent of the Lynnhaven is open for oystering.

The Lafayette could, with careful monitoring of artificial and natural reefs, soon see a similar incremental lifting of the shellfish harvest ban.

When that day comes, eating a Lafayette oyster will mark a salty, sweet environmental victory.

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Voice of the people | [View Clip](#)
03/24/2014

Herald-Dispatch - Online, The

'Country Roads' a poor choice for W.Va.

As my late father (1899-1982) once said, "The Legislature labored and brought forth a titmouse." That was when our state bird was heedlessly changed from the cardinal to the titmouse.

I read in your March 9, 2014, edition that the Legislature has made "Country Roads" an official state song. Have they listened to it?

The Blue Ridge Mountains and the Shenandoah River are entirely in the Commonwealth of Virginia, from which we seceded in 1863, and don't even touch our borders. (Please tell me that our legislators know this.) They've changed our apt and lovely state song to a shallow pop tune.

What's wrong with:

"Oh, the West Virginia Hills! How majestic and how grand,/ With their summits bathed in glory, Like our Prince Immanuel's Land!/ Is it any wonder then, That my heart with rapture thrills,/ As I stand once more with loved ones On those West Virginia hills?/ ...

"Oh, the hills, beautiful hills, How I love those West Virginia hills!/ If o'er sea o'er land I roam, Still I'll think of happy home,/ And my friends among the West Virginia hills."

The Legislature should reconsider and kill that bill.

Sara B. Staats

Huntington

'Country Roads' can be found everywhere

I was wandering the streets of Langkawi Island, Malaysia, one evening when I heard the "Country Roads" tune, but I couldn't understand the words.

I popped into the bar where the music was coming from and found myself in a multi-lingual karaoke competition.

Within an hour, the John Denver classic had been sung in Mandarin, Malay, German, Japanese and Swedish, not to mention a rather garbled version by an Australian sailor.

This song not only belongs to West Virginia, it belongs to the whole world -- and they love it. It took me home.

Allen Storm Pattie

Huntington

Big business need to be responsible

Our state has been mistreated by big business, like mountaintop mining and timbering. I'm not knocking these because it is giving work for our citizens.

But the companies should be held responsible where mudslides occur. They must replenish the vegetation that they destroyed, such as planting trees, etc.

Now the water situation. Where were our state officials and inspectors? Who is to see this doesn't happen? We pay them for that service. The company and the inspectors and other state officials should be held responsible.

The companies should not be allowed to file bankruptcy, and it and all the stockholders should have to reimburse all who were affected. Where were our state officials we voted in office? I saw pictures on those storage tanks that were deteriorating.

That didn't happen overnight. If it was inspected, they should have had it corrected. What about bottled water? Is it inspected?

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Stop idling around schools | [View Clip](#)

03/24/2014

Herald-Dispatch - Online, The

Idlewild was New York's go-to airport until 1963 (it's now JFK). Idle hands may be the devil's workshop. And Eric Idle and the rest of Monty Python are getting active again. But have you thought about the idle threat that moms and dads make when they line up in their cars for "Pick-up-N-Go" at elementary and grade schools across the country?

Idling cars can cause a lot of health problems for kids, exposing them to densely polluted air from car exhaust and triggering coughing, asthma and bronchitis. One idling car emits 20 times more pollution than a car traveling at 32 mph. And it spews ozone, sulfur, dioxides, carbon monoxide, particulate matter and more. Geez, wheeze.

The benefits of cleaning up schoolyard air were pretty clear when Washington state retired smoke-spewing school buses or retrofitted them with natural gas; They saw a 30 percent drop in kids' visits to the emergency room for asthma and bronchitis. Now

educators and parents in some locales are realizing that it's up to them to clear the polluted air from idling cars in their schoolyards, too! But more parents, administrators and kids need to tune in to turning off the idling engines.

So now -- as Monty Python says -- for something completely different, your school can:

Create classroom science projects on exhaust pollution's health hazards and have kids tally the number of idling cars and the length of time they idle.

Create a pledge letter for parents to sign promising to turn off their car after 10 seconds in line.

Mehmet Oz, M.D. is host of "The Dr. Oz Show," and Mike Roizen, M.D. is Chief Wellness Officer and Chair of Wellness Institute at Cleveland Clinic. To live your healthiest, tune into "The Dr. Oz Show" or visit www.sharecare.com.

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Ohio wastewater official nears plea change hearing | [View Clip](#)

03/24/2014

WTRF-TV - Online

CLEVELAND (AP) - A former senior official at a northeast Ohio wastewater company who's been charged with violating the federal Clean Water Act is preparing to attend a change of plea hearing.

Ben Lupo's appearance before Judge Donald Nugent is scheduled Monday in federal court in Cleveland.

Such hearings are typically scheduled for defendants about to enter a guilty plea. His defense attorney has declined comment on the meeting.

Authorities allege that Lupo ordered an employee at Hardrock Excavating LLC to repeatedly dump gas-drilling wastewater intended for an injection well into a storm sewer. Lupo has pleaded not guilty.

The employee in the case, 34-year-old Michael Guesman (GOOS'-men), of Cortland, was sentenced last week to 300 hours of community service and three years of probation.

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More chemical data released | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

Charleston Daily Mail - Online

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- New information released by the state Wednesday raises more questions about what exactly contaminated the tap water of 300,000 West Virginia residents.

The state Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management released the 2013 Tier II report filed by Freedom Industries for Etowah River Terminal, the site along the Elk River where the state discovered chemicals leaking Jan. 9.

The report must be filed by any facility that stores at least 10,000 pounds of materials defined as "hazardous" under the federal Community Right to Know act.

Facilities list the types and amounts of chemicals stored on-site in these reports.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency changed the requirements for what needs to be included in the reports for 2013, said T.D. Lively, a spokesman for the division.

Freedom filed the report Feb. 28, the day before the filing deadline.

Freedom's 2013 report includes much more information about what might have been in Tank 396, the container from which at least 10,000 gallons of chemicals leaked through two small holes.

The report lists only two substances that might have been stored in Tank 396 during 2013: MCHM or "Shurflott 944."

Shurflott 944 is a trade name for a material, said Scott Mandirola, director of the DEP's Division of Water and Waste Management. He said he didn't know much else about it.

The latest Tier II report lists the chemical components - something not included in reports for the site from 2007 to 2012 - of Shurflott 944.

According to the report, the mixture includes 65 percent of 4-methylcyclohexanemethanol, the main component of MCHM. The Shurflott 944 also contains another 16 percent combined of two other materials also listed as components of MCHM, according to the report.

However, the report says Shurflott contains 9 percent DiPPH and 7 percent PPH. It's the only material listed in the report for the site that contains PPH or DiPPH.

Within hours of discovering the spill the state reported MCHM, a chemical with a licorice odor, had leaked into the Elk River. However, Freedom told the state on Jan. 21 the spill also contained an additional material.

That material has been called both PPH and "PPH, stripped."

Freedom President Gary Southern told the DEP in Jan. 22 letter the tank contained about 88.5 percent crude MCHM, 7.3 percent PPH and 4.2 percent water.

"Our records and internal investigation indicate that there were no other materials in Tank No. 396 at the time of release," Southern said in the letter.

Southern referred to a Material Safety Data Sheet provided to the state for PPH. The only sheet made available is for a product called "PPH, Stripped." The sheet doesn't list the components of the chemical, deeming it proprietary information.

Southern declined comment Wednesday when contacted by the Daily Mail.

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Fitch Rates Dominion Resources' Senior Notes 'BBB+' | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

energybiz Insider

Fitch Ratings has assigned a 'BBB+' rating to Dominion Resources Inc.'s (Dominion) new \$400 million issuance of 2014 series A 1.25% senior notes due 2017. The Rating Outlook is Stable. The notes will rank equally with all of Dominion's existing senior unsecured indebtedness and will be senior in payment to the subordinated indebtedness. The net proceeds will be used for general corporate purposes and to repay short-term debt, which included \$1.43 billion in outstanding commercial paper as of Feb. 28, 2014.

KEY RATING DRIVERS

Diversified Operations: Dominion's ratings and Stable Outlook continue to consider the company's large diverse asset base, including significant contribution from low-risk regulated businesses. The ratings also reflect an aggressive capital investment plan, which includes construction of the Cove Point liquefaction export facility. Funding of the Cove Point export facility limits near-term de-levering of holding company debt, which is considered high relative to peers. Under Fitch's criteria, Dominion's \$1.1 billion remarketable subordinated notes receive no equity credit. The recent formation of Dominion Gas Holdings, LLC (D-Gas), which Fitch views as credit neutral for Dominion, will reduce incremental new debt issuance at the holding company.

Capital Plan: Dominion's five-year capital plan is large at approximately \$21 billion, with capital investments focused on investments in new utility generation, natural gas gathering and processing infrastructure assets and the Cove Point LNG export project. Utility projects are driven by a growing customer base and positive service territory demographics. Regulated investments are supported by regulatory mechanisms that provide timely recovery of invested capital. Dominion's natural gas business is uniquely positioned to capture midstream growth opportunities related to the Utica and Marcellus shale development. The primary rating concern relates to execution risk, and exposure to material delays and / or cost overruns, particularly related to Cove Point, that could put downside pressure on the company's financial metrics.

Financial and Debt Profile: Fitch remains concerned with the sizeable amount of parent company debt, which was approximately \$11.6 billion at Dec. 31, 2013. Fitch expects leverage metrics to remain high relative to guidelines for the rating category and risk profile. Adjusted Debt-to-EBITDAR (as calculated by Fitch) at 4.9x for the latest 12-month period ended Dec. 31, 2013 is not likely to improve materially in the near term as funding of a large capital plan limits near-term de-levering opportunities, and will keep leverage metrics high during the forecast period.

Sufficient Liquidity: Dominion's consolidated liquidity position as of Dec. 31, 2013 is sufficient at \$1.9 billion, and includes bank credit availability totaling \$1.6 billion and cash-on-hand of \$316 million. Total borrowing capacity is \$3.5 billion, with bank credit facilities expiring in September 2018. VEPCo's sub-limit is currently set at \$1.25 billion, and can be changed on an as-needed basis.

Corporate Restructuring: Dominion recently created D-Gas to primarily own the regulated gas assets. The creation of D-Gas enhances financial flexibility and long-term issuance options independent of Dominion's own financing plans. Separately, Dominion's remaining, directly-owned gas and midstream assets, mostly consisting of Cove Point, an import LNG facility, and the Blue Racer joint venture, a midstream gatherer and processor in the Utica Shale region, are candidates for a Master Limited Partnership (MLP) which Dominion plans to form in 2014. Asset drop-downs into newly formed MLPs, especially very large individual assets such as Cove Point, are typically done in stages over a multi-year time period. Fitch considers additional corporate restructuring for Dominion's portfolio of gas and midstream assets likely. Given the evolving corporate and ownership structure of Dominion's gas and midstream assets, ratings of Dominion and rating alignments of its primary subsidiaries may change over time.

RATING SENSITIVITIES

Positive:

--Execution of a sizeable capital investment plan limits positive rating actions at this time. Fitch considers timely execution of the new projects as critical to maintaining a stable company credit profile.

Negative:

--Subordination of cash flows resulting in the event of corporate spin-offs along with higher parent level debt than that considered in Fitch's forecast could lead to a negative rating action;

--An aggressive multi-year capital investment plan exposes the company to execution risk, including construction delays and cost-overruns, which could pressure financial metrics if debt financed. A material increase in parent-level debt to finance higher risk investments could adversely affect the company's ratings.

Additional information is available at 'www.fitchratings.com'.

Applicable Criteria and Related Research:

--'Rating U.S. Utilities, Power and Gas Companies (Sector Credit Factors)', March 11, 2014;

--'Recovery Ratings and Notching Criteria for Utilities', Nov. 13, 2012;

--'Corporate Rating Methodology: Including Short-term Ratings and Parent and Subsidiary Linkage', Aug. 5, 2013.

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Corporate Rating Methodology: Including Short-Term Ratings and Parent and Subsidiary Linkage

http://www.fitchratings.com/creditdesk/reports/report_frame.cfm?rpt_id=715139

Recovery Ratings and Notching Criteria for Utilities

http://www.fitchratings.com/creditdesk/reports/report_frame.cfm?rpt_id=722085

Rating U.S. Utilities, Power and Gas Companies (Sector Credit Factors)

http://www.fitchratings.com/creditdesk/reports/report_frame.cfm?rpt_id=735155

Additional Disclosure

Solicitation Status

http://www.fitchratings.com/gws/en/disclosure/solicitation?pr_id=824598

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<http://cts.businesswire.com/ct/CT?id=bwnews&sty=20140321005459r1&sid=cmtx6&distro=nx>

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Akron company will convert plastics for fuel | [View Clip](#)
03/23/2014

Intelligencer - Online, The

AKRON, Ohio (AP) — A company is spending \$20 million establishing a plant in northeast Ohio to convert scrap plastic into fuel.

Sixty tons of plastic a day will go into the plant in Akron to create 300 barrels of petrochemical products used to make diesel fuel and lubricants. That's three tractor-trailer truck loads that would otherwise end up buried in the earth.

Akron welcomed the plant to an east side neighborhood after residents in Cleveland objected to the project. EPA officials say the plant would be a minor pollution emitter.

Vadxx Energy founder and petroleum geologist Bill Ullom tells the Akron Beacon Journal (<http://bit.ly/1gWegPz>) that the project could be the start of a U.S. or even global expansion for the Akron-headquartered company.

The plant should be completed by the end of the year.

Information from: Akron Beacon Journal, <http://www.ohio.com>

W.Va. House Democrats at tipping point this election | [View Clip](#)

03/23/2014

Register-Herald - Online, The

CHARLESTON — By tying West Virginia Democrats to all things Obama and Washington, D.C., Republicans hope they can claim key congressional wins and end 85 years of Democratic rule in the state House of Delegates in one election.

West Virginia has drawn national attention for races that could dictate control on Capitol Hill, including a likely U.S. Senate matchup between West Virginia Democratic Secretary of State Natalie Tennant and Republican U.S. Rep. Shelley Moore Capito. Senate Democrats are clinging to a slim majority in Congress' upper chamber.

At the same time, West Virginia Democrats face their biggest challenge in decades for control of the House of Delegates, where all 100 seats are up for election. Republicans, who trail Democrats by six seats, last held a House majority in 1928.

West Virginia drifted away from presidential Democrats long before Obama. Its voters haven't picked a Democrat over a Republican since Bill Clinton in 1996. The state currently has one Democrat and two Republican House members, and two Democratic senators.

But Democrats have kept control in Charleston by claiming an independent streak, saying they have no allegiance to Obama or progressive congressional Democrats. They argue they're a category all their own.

Republicans say West Virginia is on the same path as some southern states, like Alabama, Arkansas and Tennessee, that had longtime Democratic legislatures and flipped. In 2010, Alabama Republicans seized control of both houses for the first time since 1874.

West Virginia Democrats paint themselves as a more conservative brand, fiscally and socially. And many openly admonish the Obama administration for policies that could hinder the state's revered coal industry, like environmental rules limiting carbon pollution from power plants.

House Democrats advocated some issues hardly indicative of liberal policymaking this legislative session. They passed measures to tighten restrictions on abortion, loosen gun laws and keep tax rates steady amid a significant budget shortfall.

Democrats still dominate in sheer numbers. The state has 614,000 registered Democrats versus 351,550 Republicans. Despite struggles in federal elections,

Democrats won 67 percent of elections across the state in 2012, in a year when Obama became even more unpopular in West Virginia.

In the 2012 Democratic primary, an inmate in a Texas federal prison drew 41 percent of the vote, compared to Obama's 59 percent as sitting president. Only Wyoming exudes more disapproval of the president's job than West Virginia, according to a Gallup poll in January.

"The greatest thing that ever happened to West Virginia Republicans is President Obama getting elected," said state House Speaker Tim Miley, D-Harrison.

Republicans have fielded a slate of candidates for all 117 legislative districts, including the 17 Senate slots on the ballot this year. Voters in 20 of the House districts pick more than one delegate. In the Senate, where Democrats hold a 24-10 lead over Republicans, voters pick two members per district.

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03/23/2014

WOWK-TV - Online

Sunday, March 23, 2014 12:56 PM EST Updated:

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Readers' forum

03/20/2014

Charleston Gazette, The

Federal government's reluctance is troubling

Editor:

I am beginning to wonder if there are political reasons why the federal government is reluctant to help in the water situation in Charleston and surrounding areas. Seven

weeks after the spill there was an extensive report on CNN regarding the situation and people's fear of drinking, bathing and using the water. CNN questioned why this is ongoing. The EPA and CDC have only provided limited assistance (and reluctant at that) for the disaster that 300,000 people in the Charleston area and region have and are continuing to experience. People are afraid to drink and use the water. At the governor's news conference and the congressional hearing, the regional director of EPA and a top official of CDC and other state and federal officials would not state the water is safe. Now FEMA refuses to provide bottled water and assistance for the affected residents. EPA's most important purpose is enforcement of the Clean Water Act for America. The CDC is charged with and responsible for the health and welfare of our citizens. FEMA is responsible for disaster assistance. I am beginning to believe there must be some political motivation or payback for this lack of assistance to our state's citizens by the federal government.

West Virginia was one state that did not support the current president. I hope the reluctance and failure of the federal government to provide assistance for the citizens of West Virginia in this crisis is not political payback by the current president's appointees. It has really bothered me to see the president and first lady having luxurious state dinners and birthday celebrations while 300,000 of our state residents are afraid to drink or bathe in the water - and then FEMA cuts off bottled water and assistance.

While at the governor's request, the president did declare the area a disaster, I do not recall any comment by the president addressing the disaster or indicating he would provide the full support of the federal government in this disaster. It seems we are having to almost beg for assistance. For what it is worth, my family has not been affected by this disaster as we receive our water from Huntington.

Jim Allman

Barboursville

It's time for officials to start listening

Editor:

The Elk River water crisis is one of the few pollution spills that we actually know about. Since it has affected so many people, the spill has generated almost daily national attention. If handled properly, West Virginia can seize the opportunity to let our state and country citizens know that we intend to take strong action to correct this problem as soon as possible and to put in place measures to make it much less likely to happen again.

Unfortunately, this is not the way things have started out. With the exception of Mayor Jones and Senator Rockefeller, our elected officials have let us down. In some cases, this has been by their silence and inaction. Governor Tomblin has blatantly

disregarded what is right. By meeting with industry officials without input from the health department to make a list of chemicals that should be excluded from regulation, the governor caused West Virginians to distrust our water, even if it is safe.

What is needed is for our elected officials to demand that the chemical, coal and natural gas industries act responsibly. Of course they are an essential part of our state economy. But when they do more harm to our state than good, they must be held accountable.

A Gazette article by Ken Ward Jr. indicated, according to a Hart Research Associates Poll, West Virginians are quite concerned about the water crisis. Overwhelmingly, those polled favor stronger regulations and enforcement of existing ones.

It is time for our political office holders and candidates for office to stand up and make their positions known on this important issue. We as voters can then make our decision concerning whom we should support in the coming election. It would also be helpful if this newspaper would interview the candidates and print their positions.

We want people to come to West Virginia to enjoy our state parks, our ski areas, our white water rafting, our golf courses, and the natural beauty of our state. We want working people, doctors, entrepreneurs, teachers, business people, retirees to move here with their families to improve our lives and their own. We want our current residents to stay and help grow our state.

We cannot fight every battle. Industry is well equipped with money, lobbyists, and lawyers. But the line has been crossed on this one. Hopefully, our fishing groups, church groups, garden clubs, etc. will write and/or call our elected officials to tell them they are letting us down and we will not stand for it.

Jay Margolis

Charleston

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